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NEW STATESMAN

Robin Blackburn: Where is China's Khrushchev?

Alexander Cockburn: Carter Stubs his Toe

David Leitch: Exit the Prince

Household Faces 2: Melvyn Bragg

Stanley Sadie on Yehudi Menuhin

A. J. P. Taylor: The Riddle of Erskine Childers

Ian Hamilton on The Price of Documentary Drama

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The Meaning of Mentmore

Easter, the climactic moment in the established religion of these islands, is in a secular age the most ample of holiday weekends. Thousands of people will spend it in national parks such as the Lake District, the Peak and Dartmoor. They owe their easy access to deliberate social planning which has triumphed over the restrictive privileges of private landowners. Thousands will be in the cities, crowding into museums and art galleries. Without an assumption of public responsibility, these institutions would not exist. Thousands, again, will be visiting the stately homes – Woburn Abbey, Longleat, Chatsworth and the rest. When due allowance is made for the drawing power of fun-fairs, miniature railways and safari parks, it remains true that the interest and beauty of these monumental artefacts is an immense attraction. They are not a minority taste; the gate-money, in the course of a year, exceeds the total chalked up by football matches. The maintenance of the stately homes is assured by a complex mixture of subsidies, grants to the National Trust, loans and tax concessions; what is certain is that, if it were not for the protective intervention of the state acting on the part of the community, all or most of them would have crumbled into ruins.

But, in unsystematic British style, there has never been any guarantee that the work of conservation would be consistently kept up. In recent years, losses have been disturbingly frequent. It must be stressed that the word 'loss' has to be used in a literal sense; what is gone is gone, irreparably, and can never be regained. In 1972, the NEW STATESMAN protested in vain against the demolition of Grange Park. In 1975 the owner of Brough Hall was permitted to destroy all but a remnant of that remarkable building. In 1976 Stonor Park was thrown on to the market. In 1977 we have had the scandalous cliff-hanger over the fate of Mentmore. Here what was placed in peril was not simply a building but an astonishing collection of paintings, furniture and *objets d'art* which – by a process not entirely explicable in logical terms – had been welded into a harmonious whole. It is universally agreed that the terms on which state responsibility for Mentmore can be secured are a bargain. Nothing was needed except an act of decision on the part of the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Peter Shore. The months went by, then the weeks, then the final agonising days; Mr Shore took no action until the eleventh hour, as though the saving of Mentmore were an act of clemency instead of a duty.

To idealise the past owners of Mentmore is no part of our argument. Baron Meyer de Rothschild, who had the house built and assembled the collection, was an acquisitive banker who recognised no social obligations. Lord Rosebery, who became the proprietor at the close of the 19th century, was a grandee in what had already become an anachronistic style, and incidentally a bad Prime Minister. None of these people – down to the present Dowager Countess with her half-ludicrous and half-offensive remarks to the press – ever saw themselves as trustees for society. For them, works of art were objects of private enjoyment. The history of capitalism, as it has shed the lingering traditions of feudalism, shows a transmutation from ostentatious display to calculating commercialism. The maxim is: when it is no longer advantageous to keep, then sell. Buyers, no doubt, are available. The unity of Mentmore is intangible, not to be priced at Sotheby's. A Renaissance masterpiece may go to an American gallery; the Rubens fireplace may adorn a home in Bishop's Avenue; the Louis XV table may wind up in Qatar or Dubai.

All that is valuable in human terms – all that constitutes, in a phrase once popular in Labour Party oratory, 'the quality of life' – has been transferred by degrees from the sphere of private patronage to that of national responsibility. Hospitals, homes for the aged, schools, libraries: all were graciously conferred by charity in an epoch that has passed away. In the cultural sphere, as much could be said for orchestras, opera houses, theatres. In our time it should be the pride of a Labour government to assert the public interest over the cheeseparing of reactionary Philistines.

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

The Death of the Silly Party

There was a time when the Liberal Party was the Nutters' Party. It welcomed all and sundry, provided all and sundry could demonstrate that they were more or less irredeemably beyond the pale. All the fads of the Labour Party and all the shortcomings of the Tories, the eccentricities of the English Nationalists, the dottiness of the Scots, the loopiness of the Welsh, the fantastic behaviour of the Cornish separatists – all, one might say, of the pied beauty of British politics was found in the Liberals. A haven of utter silliness in a wilderness of sanity, they were there to amuse, to entertain, to divert. Some of them were born silly, some achieved silliness, some had silliness thrust upon them. But by God, at the end of the day, when the chips were down, they were silly.

A word about this word 'silly'. It's already cropped up quite often in this column, and really needs a little definition. First of all, there's nothing wrong with silliness. In origin the word is Anglian – *selig*. It means nothing more than happy, or innocent, a meaning it retained in its Middle English form *sely*. As far as I know, the last example of this correct usage (but perhaps readers can come up with more recent ones) occurs in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798):

> The silly buckets on the deck
> That had so long remained,
> I dreamt that they were filled with dew
> And when I woke, it rained!

The buckets were silly, not in the sense of stupid, but in the sense of innocent. The buckets were *not guilty*, like the Ancient Mariner himself, of shooting the albatross. They did not partake of any responsibility. They were innocent, says a note in my edition, and therefore blessed.

In exactly the same way, the Liberal Party used to be silly. The decades passed, administrations rose and fell, reputations were made and lost, successive Chancellors eased and squeezed the economy. the furniture vans arrived in Downing Street, new curtains were ordered, carpets were worn down, manifestos were abandoned and pledges were pledged – but the Liberals were not responsible. Sometimes, like the silly buckets, they filled with dew, or filled with dew in the dreams of guilty men. There were the great revivals – Orpington, and a couple of others. But these, like rainfall, were nothing to do with the buckets themselves. They just happened, and the Liberals would get very excited. Now, however, all those happy days have passed, and for the Liberal Party the Age of Silliness is well and truly over.

So too is the Age of the Bucket. David Steel (according to the *Guardian*) told his party on Monday that the Government would not want to do business with a 'bucket shop' that was unable to make up its mind about anything. As a matter of fact (although I confess I had to look this one up) the expression 'bucket shop' does not indicate indecision at all. A bucket shop is a crooked brokerage firm which specialises in choosing bad investments for its clients, but not actually investing the clients' money. The bucket shop simply tells you that you've gone bust through their incompetence, and then pockets your fictional losses. And this, we gather, is what the Liberals were up to, and – said young Steel – it's got to stop.

Now it was clear, from the moment that Steel took over the Liberal Party, that a mortal blow had been struck against silliness. One looks back on his election campaign as a great final fling: John Pardoe's platform, with its delicious irresponsibility – 'What this party needs is a real bastard – vote for me'; and then the ingenious way Steel proved himself an even greater bastard by telling the press that Pardoe's hair wasn't real. It was a looking-glass version of the normal political campaign, with each candidate trying to prove himself worse than his rival. It was silly, all right, but the silliness was unilateral. The triumphant candidate was chronically well-behaved. Try as he might, he could not actually be silly.

Few of those who attended the Liberal Assembly last year noticed the change that had come over the party. The delegates continued to behave as if nothing had happened. All over Llandudno their orange badges proclaimed that something harmless and amusing was going on – a commission on microdevolution, a meeting of Gays against Fluoridation, an Esperantist coffee morning. There was street theatre (*The Trial and Acquittal of Peter Hain*), morris-dancing and a lecture on 'Radical Alternatives to Sex'. At the end of the week, when Steel made his great speech, with its extended simile in which he compared politics to mountaineering, the blow had already been struck, but nobody noticed. The fact that Steel was behaving like John F. Kennedy seemed in keeping with the hilarious mood of the time. Nobody realised he believed his own rhetoric.

But there is a dangerous point in the life of a political group when a sense of destiny, a spirit of seriousness, begins to take over. It happens, on the Trotskyist Left, when a small group decides that it has become a mass party – and woe betide those who fail to notice the difference. It is like that moment when Caligula asks Claudius whether he can see the change, and Claudius has to guess what on earth Caligula means; he stumbles around for a moment, and then suddenly realises that Caligula has become a god.

In the same way, the Liberal Party had ceased to be silly, but nobody realised until they were told. Pardoe continued to behave as if he were still silly. On Budget day, he was all for Healey's package. The next day all bets were off. The Liberals were going to bring down the Government, themselves, the pillars of the temple, the lot. After that, it took all Steel's skill at back-pedalling to save the situation. Watching him on Thursday night as the Stechford vote was being counted, as Robin Day (clearly exhausted by anticipation) absentmindedly asked him what he thought of the three major party leaders, I could not help feeling sorry for his predicament. For, as a serious politician, he had chosen rather the wrong moment to 'come out'.

The antics of the Government have been mysterious enough. Who, for instance, really imagined that the Budget was actually going to be popular? I mean, who among those who actually drew the thing up? You and I imagined that it was going to be popular, partly because Healey had told us so often how exceedingly generous and jolly it was going to be, and partly because we thought that the timing of the by-election indicated government confidence that the public would be pleased. But the Budget had been drawn up in 'a minority situation'; it had been pared down, filed away, chiselled and sanded until it was absolutely smooth; it could contain nothing controversial, none of the usual closures of loopholes in obscure taxes or little points of detail which might arouse the anger of the Tories. It had to be classically simple, and that is exactly what it turned out to be. In fact the simple sort of Budget which might have been expressly designed to anger the car-conscious voters of Stechford.

It is sometimes said that the Callaghan Administration has had more than its fair share of bad luck. This may be true, but it has also had more than its fair share of bad judgment. The loss of Workington was not unavoidable – the simple expedient of keeping Fred Peart in the Commons would have avoided it. And what about the loss of Stechford? Was there no way *that* could have been avoided? Callaghan must sometimes have asked himself the question. No doubt it looked at the time as if he had all the trumps he needed to make the trick. He miscalculated then. For now he is short of votes, short of talent and pretty short of ideas. The alliance with the former silly party has hardly got off to a very good start. The best thing to do now, surely, would be to think of something popular to offer the voters, and prepare for an October election.

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David Leitch

Exit the Prince

For nearly three years the grey, equivocal figure of Prince Michel Poniatowski has been making enemies with the intoxicated abandon of a man with virtually unlimited power at his disposal. As Minister of the Interior, in charge of the police, the various security services, and a good deal of the political organisation of the country, there was no one to say him nay.

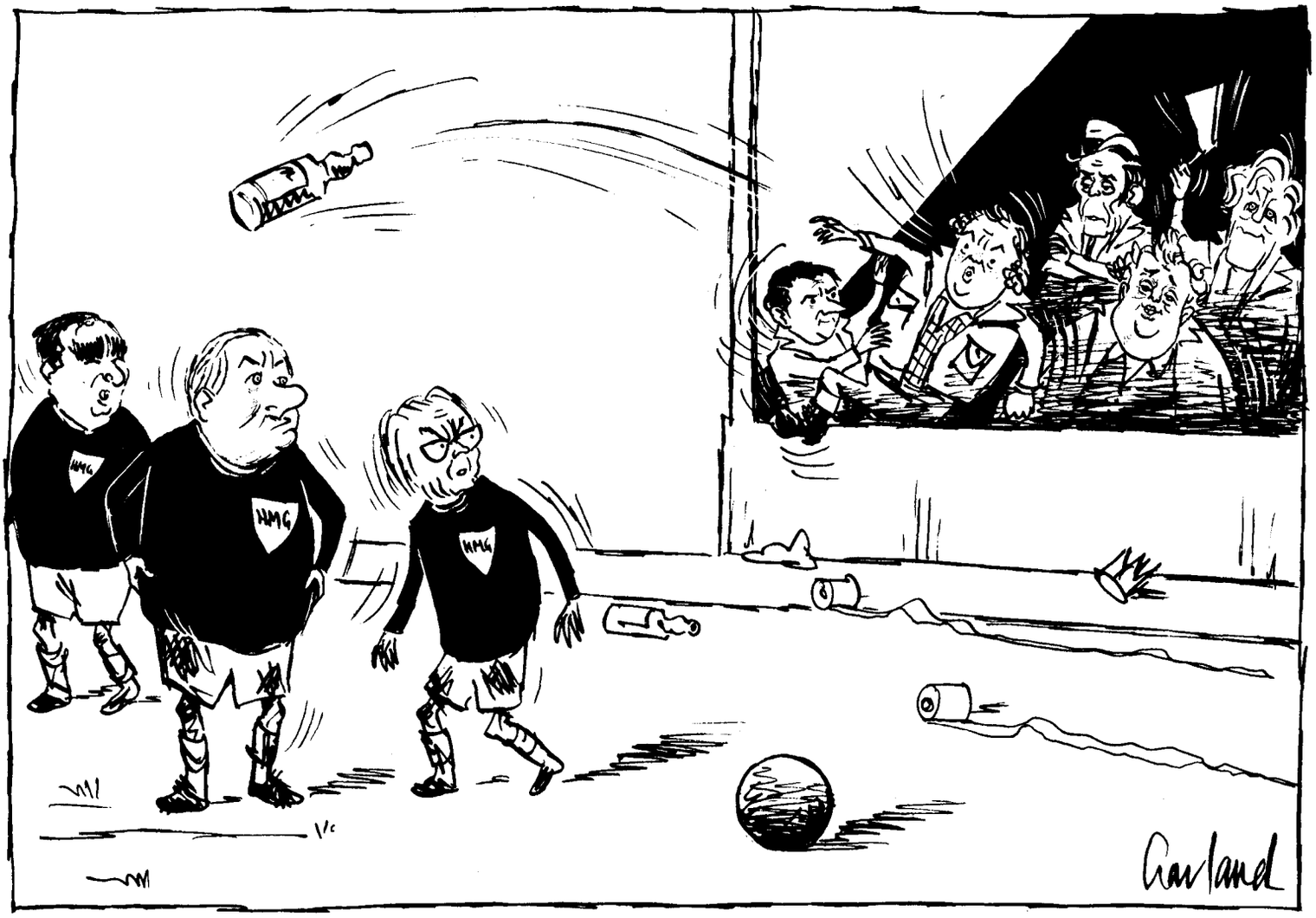
Now he is, perhaps, no more than an ambiguous memory. Since Poniatowski was by far the most important casualty of President Giscard's last-gasp cabinet reshuffle, I expected some opposition celebration to mark his going. The restraint has been deafening. No choirs of angels have been invoked to sing the prince on his way to the political wilderness. So many people are delighted he is no longer with us, but they have pointedly kept their feelings to themselves; it is as if they fear he might suddenly return and wreak terrible vengeance.

It is hard to believe now, but for many years, despite his ubiquitous presence on the frayed edges of French political life, 'Ponia' was regarded as something of a joke. He was always a man to make enemies, but even his most faithful political opponents invariably spoke of him with a kind of indulgence. Georges Pompidou called him an elephant – but an unusual specimen, who had learnt the trick of treading so softly that he neither broke anything nor made any noise. Ponia was always around – in Parliament, among Giscard's professional advisers when he first went to the Ministry of Finance as far back as 1959, and five years later at the centre of the new Independent Republican Party that Giscard set up around an office on the Boulevard St Germain.

Ponia was everywhere yet nowhere, he had everything but nothing, and only the most far-sighted of journalists bothered to consult him at this period, despite his constant, almost embarrassing, availability. It is extremely difficult for an outsider to understand how someone apparently so superlatively qualified for the highest offices of state – and so obsessed by the exercise of political power – came to be regarded so lightly.

His background, it was often said, was subtly different from that of his political *alter ego*, the young Giscard, even though the distinctions were hard to draw unless one had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the *mores* and family trees of the French upper-classes. Giscard was rich, but Ponia, whose grandfather André was a freewheeling capitalist tycoon, with an empire spanning American railways, South African gold and European banks, was richer. Giscard's background was grand, but Ponia's, which included Napoleonic marshals as well as the last kings of Poland, was infinitely grander. The brilliant young man who was later to become President came from a family which in three generations had managed to establish itself as a kind of pseudo-aristocracy. Ponia, with royal blood in his veins, was palpably the genuine article, while Giscard's father had been obliged to dredge up the aristocratic 'd'Estaing' at the end of the family name from the morasses of some genealogical swamp where only the most intrepid researchers might venture.

The fact that they were connected by marriage simultaneously brought them closer together and emphasised the difference between them. Anne-Aymone Giscard, whose unmarried name was the Princess de Brantes, is a cousin of Ponia's: in marrying this lady Giscard acquired a certain social glory by proxy. Ponia's social position was unassailable but, through an accident of history, it also seemed to have condemned him to the political sidelines.



'I'm not sure our fan club isn't more trouble than it's worth!'

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For his family had established themselves in North Africa after the outbreak of war and fallen, inevitably enough, into the middle of the political manouevring which characterised Algiers at this time. It was the period of the two generals – De Gaulle operating largely from London, and Henri Giraud, established in Algiers. The Poniatowskis backed the closer – and senior – one of the Generals. They appeared to be in good company. President Roosevelt, for example, was a Giraud man, and periodically Churchill hovered on the edge of the same camp. Ponia, then a young paratroop officer, not only went along with his family's choice, but committed such unforgiveable sins as criticising the Gaullist contribution to the Resistance forces in occupied France, claiming that many leading Gaullist were hiding out in Whitehall with the Channel between themselves and the real action.

Thus Ponia, in his early twenties, had irretrievably disqualified himself from exercising major political influence in the Fifth Republic, which came into being at a time when he was himself nearing political maturity. It was possible – just – to progress up the political hierarchy from 1958 onwards without having the most important qualification – a wartime background of unconditional and impassioned support for General de Gaulle. With a history like Ponia's, one of unconditional opposition, the commanding heights were excluded for over a decade. He was therefore obliged to operate in the shadows, a modest *chef du cabinet* when Giscard became Minister of State at the Finance Ministry, and Giscard's freelance political adviser in later years when Ponia's protégé had established himself under De Gaulle as the unassailable architect and chief executive of the much discussed French 'economic miracle' of the fat Fifth Republic years.

Once General de Gaulle had passed safely into the history books Ponia was able to come in from the edges and plant his elephantine hooves in the middle of the political road. After Pompidou's death Giscard hesitated to announce his own candidature – not on account of his profound grief, as Ponia busily told everyone, but simply because he could not make up his mind. Ponia made it up for him. He masterminded the successful electoral campaign that followed and was now in the centre at last – whenever Giscard appeared. Looking youthful, dynamic and so forth, Ponia was at his elbow. Indeed the most characteristic images of the campaign were the two of them side by side, Giscard all judicious attention and Ponia whispering into what was soon to become the presidential ear. After Giscard's election there were rumours that Ponia would be made Vice-President. Such an appointment, or title at any rate, was already an irrelevance. By becoming Minister of the Interior he was already more powerful than anyone else in France except the President himself.

After waiting so long it is perhaps not surprising that he should have exercised his power with such unrestrained relish. Raymond Marcellin, the Gaullist Interior Minister, had acquired a reputation as a hard man, but compared with the newly-installed Ponia, mobilising the police at any excuse with Napoleonic abandon, even this repressive figure began to seem a model of discretion.

Ponia, for example, arrived at a point where it became normal for him to announce a suspect's guilt in advance of any court verdict, and even to indicate what he regarded as an appropriate sentence. (When there was a public controversy about an unusually distressing case of kidnapping and child murder the Interior Minister blithely issued a statement to the effect that the – still unconvicted – suspect should be guillotined as there were no extenuating circumstances.)

The noticeable absence of gloating about Ponia's departure does *not* indicate that his erstwhile enemies have decided that his ministerial career, seen in the proper perspective, was any less appalling than it looked at the time. It is simply that he knows too much about too many. And they are profoundly worried about what he might get up to now he has been obliged to return to the shadows. Adieu sweet prince – but for how long?

Patrick Wintour

Burying Bullock

Politically, Bullock was intended as a swop with the unions for Phase Three, but it now looks fated to become the chief casualty of minority government, dropped as part of a swop with the Liberals instead. The precedent is there. The German Social Democrats last summer significantly watered down their unions' boardroom aspirations en route to the statute book in order to mollify the FDP, the minority Liberal Party. The implications of the pact for the Industrial Democracy (Companies and Nationalised Industries) Bill which was due to be introduced at the end of this session after a White Paper in the summer, have yet to be spelt out. The press has assumed that the Lib-Lab alliance kills Bullock but then they have been administering the last rites since the day of the Report's publication. Since the pact, little has been heard from the Liberals on industrial democracy – not a great deprivation perhaps. Their policy was forged in the inter-war years; and it remains a pertinent solution to the problems besetting industrial relations in the wake of the general strike. Unfortunately for the Liberals, even British industry has changed since then and their plans take no account of those changes.

But the Liberals are rather chuffed about the tradition behind their theme of profit sharing and workers' councils independent of trade unions. Majority Bullock drew a discreet veil of silence over the Liberal submission while Steel called Bullock 'tame and damaging' in a recent article in *The Times*, bizarrely devoted to participation agreements in an American retail company, Sears and Roebuck. That Cyril Smith (owner of Smith Springs of Rochdale) has been the Liberal spokesman on these matters hardly lends intellectual seriousness to the Liberal ideas. Nevertheless the cold fact is that if Bullock is castrated in legislative form (by the Liberals or whomever), so losing the support of the unions and the PLP Left, then industrial democracy will be put in cold storage and along with it some union goodwill.

However it is not just the Liberals who will dispatch Bullock to the abattoir. After all, the pact only formalised Labour's weakness in the Commons. The cabinet's uncertainty has not helped. After the Report's publication, with hysterical threats coming and going in all directions, the Minister responsible, Edmund Dell expressed the pious hope that the supporters of the majority and minority reports would look for the 'common ground'. It was laudable of the Government not to try and steamroll through its manifesto commitment (unlike the Tories' Industrial Relations Act which flew in the face of the Donovan Report). But the debate, like all great debates, merely provided time for each side to dig deeper and more sophisticated trenches .

Lord Watkinson, president of the CBI, has been notably unrepentingly abusive, and promising that any attempt to legislate along majority Bullock lines would produce a 'response from the CBI which would make the confrontation over the Industrial Relations Act look like a vicarage picnic . . . we are not prepared to negotiate TUC domination of the private sector. Period. And I hope I have made myself perfectly clear.' It may just be faintly undemocratic posturing, but it does show that to British management Bullock still represents, in spite of all the moral exhortation and academic research, little but sterile conflict in the boardroom and the end of profit. By now each side can recite the conflicting arguments and statistics in their sleep. The common ground, if it ever existed, remains an unenticing no-man's-land.

Since Peter Shore left Trade the Government's lead has hardly been inspiring banner-waving and does not augur well for a convincing Bill. Indeed 'Bullockites' go around discussing whether it is Mr Dell or really the Under-Secretary at Trade, Stanley Clinton Davis who is the less enthusiastic. But both think the unions cannot expect the full cake.

The three critical areas emerging in the negotiations at the Ministry are single channel representation through recognised unions, a one- or two-tier board, and parity on that board between shareholder and worker representatives. On the last of these the Government has doubts that, in the case of multinational companies, foreign owners might become a minority on their own board and then be discouraged from investing in Britain. On the question of single channel

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representation the unions are edging towards a compromise. For example, it may be made mandatory that all the workers (including non-unionists) will have the right to vote not just on the principle of whether to have worker representatives, as Bullock recommends, but also on whom should be their representatives. This relaxation would be on the proviso that the joint representation council of the unions is allowed to make the nominations to ensure a proper distribution between all the unions in a company. Putting something as fragile as Bullock into law was always going to be a politically delicate transplant. But the Government will have shown a real spinelessness at its heart if, as it appears it might, it offers a package of less than equal representation on a supervisory board without strict strategic functions laid down in company law.

Confronted by this possibility, the unions are increasingly divided about what to do. David Lea of the TUC economic committee is the most optimistic: he expects a Bill for both private and public industry early next session which implies workers in the boardroom by the summer of 1979. Giles Radice, who has had experience of trying to get a similar Bill through the House, is also hopeful that the Liberals will now 'stop shouting their mouths off and look at things seriously'. But if the Government cannot idle away until 1979 waiting for the economy to turn up, neither can it afford another legislative débâcle. Many in the PLP and the unions believe that only an adulterated Bill for the private sector could be passed and that such a Bill, difficult to reverse, would discredit the principle of industrial democracy; better to agree that, thanks to Bullock, Labour is now more incisive on workers' control and wait for a Labour parliamentary majority in the 1980s. In the meanwhile, the manifesto can be honoured for the 7 million workers in the nationalised and municipalised industries where the unions are more united and the activity quite frenetic. The Post Office already has an agreement, the NUM is making progress and last month the TUC's nationalised industries committee backed Bullock-style legislation.

If it does gain a reprieve, the private sector will still have the onus of fulfilling its promise to press ahead with participation below the boardroom. The unreformed boardrooms' sense of national responsibility would also be under special scrutiny. Their recent performance could not have damaged their case more comprehensively. In the past two months we have seen GEC's profit handout, a 42 per cent increase in overseas investment ridiculing the industrial strategy and our exporters taking the opportunity provided by a competitive exchange rate to pocket a quick profit rather than increase their export volume. The week after I heard Sir Jack Callard, signatory of the minority report, proclaiming that ICI had the best participation scheme in the world, research was published on ICI's increasing complicity in low wages for South African blacks. Would that involvement be tolerated if there were trade unionists in the boardroom and no Lord Denning to stop them exercising their conscience? No wonder the directors have closed the door on Bullock and are pleading moodily through the keyhole: 'I want to be alone.'

Alexander Cockburn

Carter Stubs His Toe

In retrospect it is hard to see why President Carter sent the largest delegation in years all the way to Moscow to discuss arms reductions. Ever a penny pincher in small matters – he has just announced that the presidential yacht *Sequoia* is to be sold – he could have saved a handsome amount in air fares merely by inviting Brezhnev to participate in a bilateral phone-in, so that the entire American people could share directly in the negotiations.

But Carter passed up this opportunity, contenting himself with disclosing the substance of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's proposals to the American public before the Russians had a chance to examine them. The enormous delegation – weighted down with Assistant Secretaries of State and low on knowledgeable staff, in a reversal of the Kissinger mode – got all the way to Moscow and was back within the week, victims of a spirited Russian rebuff and submitted to the additional discomfort of threats and menaces from Giscard d'Estaing apropos Concorde's landing rights in New York.

After the initial surprise at the Russians' refusal even to discuss the package – a White House press briefing was delayed for two hours so that an official reaction could be carpentered together – Carter came out swinging. Ever a man to take the unpopular stand, he told congressional leaders he would 'hang tough', a Nixonism that immediately found support. Senate majority leader Robert Byrd echoed him forthwith: 'The American people will hang tough behind a strong leader. The Soviet leaders are testing President Carter. This is no time for belligerence or sabre-rattling, but it is a time for clear vision and strength.'

'Monsieur le Président des Etats-Unis: We French, no less than the Russians, will tolerate no further nonsense about human rights.'

The official line is that the new arms reduction proposals hammered together in Washington over the past two months were so revolutionary that the Russians were simply taken aback and after the initial *froideur*, exhibited last week, will eventually come to the bargaining table. But with surprising speed, in such relatively compliant organs as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, a contrary view has been promoted. This view, expressed in off-the-record confidences by members of Vance's party, emphasises the following: that the Americans completely miscalculated in presenting a package that upset many of the premises of previous SALT negotiations, which Kissinger told the Russians was '90 per cent complete'.

The new package offered the Russians nothing on the US 'Cruise Missile', a subsonic pilotless weapon of extreme accuracy in whose technology the Americans are far superior, unless the Russians accepted enormous cuts in the areas – heavy rockets – where they are conceived to have strength. As the Russians saw it, and many in the US Defence establishment appear to be conceding the fact, the Americans changed the rules of all preceding SALT negotiations and in essence suggested a freeze in areas where they are ahead and reductions where the Russians might be approaching 'rough parity'. The American arsenal would have remained nearly intact, the Russian greatly reduced; and the package, in a final act of miscalculation, was presented on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, rather than as an initial bargaining ploy.

First victim of the disastrous encounter would appear to be Cyrus Vance, whose brave search for a silver lining was unpleasantly discommoded by Gromyko's vehement press conference. His expedition may have achieved only one thing, and not one likely to add to his own stature: namely, the rehabilitation of Henry Kissinger as a man who appeared to know what he was doing, even if in the view of many Americans he was doing the wrong thing. It is almost certain that Vance's own prudent instincts argued for presentation of the Moscow trip as merely 'exploratory' in the same idiom as his recent voyage to the Middle East. But he fell victim to Carter's own addiction, now becoming more and more conspicuous, for the oversell.

Carter was the person who touted the importance of the Moscow trip. He was the person who said that his advocacy of human rights in the Soviet Union, his meeting with Bukovsky and his letter to Sakharov would not affect arms talks. He was the person who called, three days before the planes for Moscow took off, for increasing funding for Radios Free Europe and Liberty. Liberal defenders of this strategy argue that it was essential in order to placate the hawks in Congress such as Henry Jackson: a trade-off, in effect, be-

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tween human rights and the Cruise missile. But in this equation he appears to have forgotten the Russians, or merely conceived them as refractory members of the Georgia state legislature – a group for which he always had contempt.

But now, still advocating his ambition for serious arms reductions, he is in a cleft stick. Since he argues that the package was a fair one, he is in the position of assailing the Russians for refusing to slow the arms race. This will add fuel to the hawks' advocacy of increased US military spending on such things as the B-1 bomber, the MX moveable missile system, the Trident nuclear submarine and indeed the Cruise missile. At the end of last week the House Armed Services Committee voted 25-1 for just such increased funding.

It is, of course, conceivable that in future negotiations the US position will be modified and that the Russians will be induced to re-enter the arms talks. US spokesmen are still hopefully arguing that this will be the case. The alternative will be yet another leap in arms spending, of the sort familiar in the early days of the Kennedy Administration and the so-called 'Missile Gap'. Such a leap would not diminish Carter's popularity, but it would reduce his credibility or at the very least his dwindling claims to be politically adroit.

The question of political adroitness and competency is becoming a matter of some importance. The extent to which Carter's Administration is simply not yet an efficiently functioning entity should not be underestimated. Scores of important positions have not yet been filled. New officials have not yet mastered their jobs. To take one example, the arms package taken to Moscow was only approved by the National Security Council two days before the trip and was felt by many officials in important parts of the executive branch not to have been adequately 'staffed out'.

The impression given is one of ill-conceived anarchy, and such an impression is complemented on the domestic side. There have been tremendous commotions over Carter's attack on federal water projects, a famous mode of pork-barreling for Congress, much palaver about rows between the executive and legislative branches, thunderous pre-publicity about the energy plan to be unveiled on 20 April; but on the central matter of unemployment and the inauguration of a new age after the horrors of Ford and Greenspan absolutely nothing appears to be happening.

Carter has had relatively little 'input', as they say, on domestic policy, even though he promised in his campaign that this would be his main area of concern in his first year in office. But he has fallen for the old temptation and launched himself on the high seas of foreign – largely rhetorical – adventures. After the Moscow excursion, the results are not in the least encouraging.

New York

Robin Blackburn

Where is China's Khrushchev?

During the Cultural Revolution the grave charges against Liu Shao-ch'i were summed up by labelling him 'China's Khrushchev'; to this day it remains one of the most deadly terms of political abuse in Peking. Yet, in the aftermath of Mao's death, China's rulers badly need to discover someone with the boldness and the iconoclasm of a Khrushchev to tackle the appalling problems bequeathed to them by the declining years of the Great Helmsman. That the leadership poses an acute problem is shown by the prolonged official silence – now once again rumoured to be about to end – concerning the future of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, and the continuing delay in convening a top party gathering to confirm the position of Hua Kuo-feng.

These days, comparison of the People's Republic with the Soviet Union of the past or present is regarded as obnoxious in many quarters. But anyone who has travelled in both knows that touring a factory, visiting a successful commune or state farm, interviewing an official or dealing with the tourist bureau is a remarkably similar experience whether in Canton or the Ukraine – and one not to be met with in, say, Sweden or the United States. At least such comparisons are more pertinent than the strained parallels with China's distant past frequently encountered in official propaganda and equally beloved of certain China-watchers.

Mao himself probably identified more with Stalin than with Lenin. He used to say that Stalin, a 'great Marxist', made mistakes but that he was 70 per cent right, surely a respectably high mark in anybody's book. When Russia's great dictator died he left a country with a sullen and terrorised populace, a rigid and lop-sided economy, a straitjacketed culture, a grotesque personality cult and a gigantic system of labour camps. Externally there was simmering popular unrest in Eastern Europe, a bitter feud with Tito and rather cool relations with India and other neutral states. Khrushchev permitted a cultural thaw, freed several millions from the labour camps, denounced Stalin at the 20th Congress, promoted agriculture, and generally rendered the prevailing political system more tolerable for the mass of the population. The limits of 'de-Stalinisation' were starkly revealed in Budapest, but the Polish October was accepted, relations with Tito normalised, Nasser and Castro were supported. Khrushchev blundered prodigiously in relations with Peking but otherwise his successors have much to thank him for.

Though the impasse of the post-Mao People's Republic is not identical to that of post-Stalin Russia, it is in its own way just as serious and with not a few disturbing echoes from that past. Compared with the under-developed capitalist world China's economy is relatively successful and decidedly egalitarian. The growth of China's agricultural output since 1949 is probably a little ahead of India's, but there is not much in it. China's main cities still cannot be fed without grain imports. Industry has grown much faster than in India, but the gap between China and Russia or Japan is still growing, especially in the most advanced sectors. As the Vietnamese discovered, China does not produce the weapons needed for modern warfare.

In foreign policy Mao's last years saw China gain entry to the UN and diplomatic recognition from scores of countries. But although China now has the trappings of an influential power it has little of the substance. Just as Peking has a nuclear bomb it cannot deliver, so it has a seat on the Security Council, but without any convincing foreign policy. The friendship of Kissinger, Strauss, Holden Roberto or Pinochet scarcely compensates for the fruitless antagonism between Peking and Moscow, the icy relations with Hanoi and the harvest of defeat and ignominy in Angola.

The Chinese Communist Party is today in greater disarray than the CPSU in the Fifties. The mass of the population is restive and rebellious rather than cowed or terrorised, but this is no consolation to the police chief or party boss. Strikes and demonstrations in the towns and cities reveal an urban discontent which is greater and more explosive than that in the countryside. Economic advance has favoured the peasants, especially in those regions with fertile soil and good communications, since decentralisation and 'self-reliance' allow for very uneven development. While some rural incomes have grown quite fast, urban wages have remained more or less stationary for two decades, despite a five-fold increase in industrial productivity. Differentials between urban workers are quite narrow (three to one) but as everybody knows the party bureaucrat lives in a different world.

Every year some 2 million urban youngsters are 'sent down' (*hsia fang*) to the countryside to work in labour colonies; conditions are certainly much better than in Russia's labour camps but Lin Piao has been quoted as saying that *hsia fang* was just another name for corrective labour. Open or organised dissidence leads to a prolonged term in a labour colony. The great majority of China's adult citizens are now literate and possess a radio, but the Cultural Revolution left China an utterly conformist cultural desert. Only six feature films were made, and as many novels published, in a decade. Even these were ideologically purified rehashes of old favourites. When I visited China in 1972 friends complained they had seen the same film 20 times. At the same time the possibilities for cultural self-expression were drastically limited, even if unorthodox political themes were avoided. The empty, smiling faces on official posters began to beam out even from the traditionally fresh and lively peasant paper-cuts.

A series of bizarre campaigns and obscure factional conflicts have thoroughly debauched all official political and ideological discourse. Thus official bogey-men such as

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Liu or Lin are invariably described not just as 'capitalist roaders' but as Japanese agents. The Chinese public snaps up each new titbit with eagerness and cynicism because it relieves the tedium of official propaganda.

Is there any prospect that Hua Kuo-feng will prove capable of stabilising China's political system, dynamising its economy and imposing some more compelling logic on its foreign relations? Hua has sought to squeeze the maximum advantage from the defeat and disgrace of the 'gang of four'. But though he has resoundingly reversed their ideas on such pressing questions as whether 'empiricism' is, or is not, the main enemy, he has yet to indicate any substantive new departure in either domestic or foreign policy. Even before the disappearance of the 'four pests' there was some relaxation in the cultural field and this seems to be continuing, but within fairly narrow limits.

Hua himself rose to prominence through police work and agricultural administration, two pillars of the Maoist order. He is most unlikely to clip the powers of Public Security, to abolish the *hsia feng* programme or to alter the prevailing relations between town and countryside. So far he promises business as usual. Hua must enjoy powerful backing from sections of the military, but he has yet to be confirmed in his new posts by a meeting of the Central Committee. The official propaganda machinery has creaked noisily into operation promoting the cult of Chairman Hua but this somehow underlines his lack of adequate credentials or experience.

The man with the strongest claims to the posts occupied by Hua – and also to the title of China's Khrushchev – is, of course, Teng Hsiao-p'ing. Teng is one of the last active members of the Communist leadership which was responsible for making the revolution and changing the history of the world. Many in the West have been persuaded by the Mao cult that Mao alone was the instigator and guide of this gigantic popular upheaval. Yet even at the leadership level there were scores whose political achievement bears comparison with that of Mao and who, on occasion, were proved right against him. Teng was already, in the late Twenties, successfully leading the celebrated River Soviet near the Vietnamese border. He participated in the Long March and subsequently became Political Commissar of the Fourth Front Army. In the Fifties he was made General Secretary of the party and opposed Mao's voluntarism during the Great Leap Forward campaign. Mao is reported to have complained: 'Teng Hsiao-p'ing is deaf, but at meetings he would sit far away from me.' Mao had little liking for colleagues who thought for themselves or had an independent title to the posts they held. After Liu himself, Teng was to be the most prominent target of the Cultural Revolution.

Teng has now been twice disgraced and vilified; but his strength is that he enjoys good relations with the party apparatus in the Army, which survived the Cultural Revolution virtually intact and which has been responsible for a host of rehabilitations of former leading cadres. Teng seems to be campaigning with his customary bounce. He appeared in a public restaurant in Peking in mid-January – those in or near the ruling group are rarely seen in such familiar surroundings – to be greeted by applause which he, with a smile, acknowledged by saying: 'Continue to criticise Teng.'

In late December the campaign against Teng abruptly stopped. The last mention of it was, significantly enough, in a speech by Hua in late December to an agricultural conference. By January wall posters were seen in Peking calling for Teng's return. The inhabitants of the capital thronged in thousands to read these posters. In the press the 'gang of four' were criticised for having attacked Chou En-lai 'and other leading comrades', and for having 'removed the Emperor's Minister', both references to Teng whose record of conflict with the Shanghai group is certainly longer than that of Chairman Hua.

If Hua's trump card is that he claims to have been selected by Mao, then Teng's is that he inherits the mantle of Chou En-lai. The massive demonstrations in Peking and other cities last April mourned the death of Chou, and protested against the dismissal of Teng, in a more spontaneous display of mass sentiment than anything seen in the Cultural Revolution. Chou and Teng were identified with the relaxation of Chiang Ching's stifling cultural tutelage. They were also identified with a comprehensive programme of modernisation which they had presented to the Fourth People's Congress in early 1975. The popular turbulence of Tien An Men Square was, of course, sternly repressed by Hua's friends in Public Security and in the Peking municipality. The following poem, read out to the acclaim of thousands of demonstrators, curiously came to be quoted in the official account of this remarkable event and thus gained currency throughout China:

> Devils howl as we pour out our grief,
> We weep but the wolves laugh.
> We spill our blood in memory of the hero,
> Raising our brows we unsheath our swords.
> China is no longer the China of yore,
> And the people are no longer wrapped in sheer ignorance.
> Gone for good is Chin Shih-huang's feudal society . . .
> What we want is true Marxism-Leninism . . .
> The day the four modernisation programmes are realised,
> We will come back to offer libations and sacrifices.

To this day the official press remains wedded to its favourite realm of analogy – the dynastic squabbles and court intrigues of China's feudal past – while well-attended demonstrations call for 'socialist democracy' and the release of those arrested after the Tien An Men Square incidents. During the first three months of this year protests and strikes have been reported from most major cities and have led to military administration being imposed on the railways. This menacing effervescence has probably harmed Teng's cause within the hierarchy, since it can be – very conveniently – blamed on his supporters.

Apologists for the People's Republic sometimes discount the gangsterism prevailing at the highest levels by claiming that there is a 'horizontal democracy' in the mass organisations at the base. Since the principal mass organisations, such as trade unions and revolutionary committees, have been successively set up, reconstructed and then entirely abolished at the will of the leadership, this is hard to credit. The veteran Chinese Trotskyist Peng Shu-tse has acidly observed that this sort of 'horizontal democracy' simply means democracy flat on its back.

Yet there is undoubtedly a self-confidence and revolutionary temper among the Chinese masses that has not been seen in Russia for many long decades. Mao carried through massive purges of the Party and state but for the most part he drew the line at killing his communist opponents. The militants who made the revolution have not been physically eliminated, as so many were in Russia. There has also been great social progress in health, education and minimum living standards despite atavistic survivals of the old China and barbarous imports from Stalinist Russia. Chinese peasants and workers seem to attribute the advances they have made to their own efforts and not to the increasingly incoherent and remote campaigns emanating from the leadership.

But, as Tien An Men memorably revealed, there is a hunger for a thoroughgoing settling of accounts with the past and for a leadership that does not treat the masses as a 'blank sheet of paper' (Mao). The prolonged obfuscation of political discourse in China rules out any facile optimism concerning the probable outcome of the present crisis. But if, and when, a Chinese Khrushchev does emerge he will not be able to dismantle the worst features of the Maoist regime without reckoning on the intervention of a turbulent and independent popular movement.

Roger Woddis

Old Boys' Bailey

Judge Mervyn Griffith-Jones and the bank-raid major he freed are both former Etonians and Life Guards officers.

> Jolly raiding weather –
> Why all the fuss?
> Cynics may wonder whether
> Mervyn is one of us,
> But we're birds of a feather
> (There's no other way to fly)
> And we'll all stick together,
> Conjoined by a certain tie.
>
> Breasts may be beaten
> When we go robbing banks,
> But having gone to Eton,
> We offer our humble thanks
> That we don't need a cheque where
> A Guard is the law of Life;
> We just finger our neckwear
> And point to a wayward wife.
>
> Let judges try us;
> Sentences they may pass
> Are quite free of bias
> Or the teeniest touch of class.
> And though justice may falter,
> The system is not to blame;
> But the more cases alter,
> The more they remain the same.

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Household Faces-2 Melvyn Bragg

The Booksmith

Television is apt to turn those who appear on it into members of a large Happy Families pack: the figures are exaggeratedly drawn, highly coloured, easily classified, deceptively familiar, and pasteboard thin. Mr Bragg the Booksmith (who has ousted the dog-eared Mr Robinson the Read from the pack) has suffered more than most from this process; though the process has not taken place without some connivance from him.

When he first appeared on our screens in 1973 he seemed to be, and to some has remained, the arts presenter of a satirist's greedy dream: the velvet suit, the pervasive interdisciplinary keenness, the impeccable Northern origin softened and balanced by a Hampstead address, the blown-dry hair, the sensitively flattened features of a bookish front-row forward, and the bloated tie-knot wedged like a Danish pastry under the jowl. He even gave damaging little interviews in which he said things like, 'In the world in which I move now it's taken for granted that you can flip from rock music to George Eliot without losing your intellectual gear' (1975). But whereas most of the other members of the pack are no more interesting than their success, and often frighteningly less so, Bragg is an exception: a man of serious ambition, deeply interested in television and its future, yet by no means dependent on his present success. Friends of long standing see him as largely unaltered by fame: he is a likeable and kindly man, cautious and resilient, with much natural charm, who admits to an egocentricity which few who know him rush to deny; in Jonathan Miller's phrase, he is 'about as modest as Larry Adler'. For the last 15 years he has written novels and worked in television; and when there has been a conflict of interest, television has taken second place. It is the novels – patient, traditional fictions about character, landscape and feeling – which confirm how far Bragg's centre of gravity is from his television image.

Bragg was born in Wigton, Cumberland, in 1939, the only child of a professional publican who now keeps a sweetshop. His Cumbrian working-class origins have always been of value and continuing importance to him: 'It's a kind of real aristocratic birth – it gave me 20 years of solidity, solid family, solid moral values, solid ambitions.' Cumbria, where he still returns for three months of every year, has provided all the emotional (plus most of the topographical) sources of his fiction, as well as the material for his recent oral history *Speak for England*. He went to the local grammar school, and passed through a largely self-inflicted religious phase – 'if there was any brain-washing, then I brain-washed myself' – whose influence still survives in a residual Christian belief of a Wordsworthian flavour. Bragg won a history scholarship to Wadham College, Oxford, where he worked assiduously, was widely liked, and built up his first library, appropriately, with threepenny paperbacks from the Oxfam shop. He acted a little, began his first novel, and courted P. F. Strawson's *au pair*, the daughter of the Rector of the Sorbonne, whom he married in his last term. He put in to do research on Eleanor Marx, took a Second from an isolation hospital while suffering from glandular fever, applied, in the vague way of most graduates, for jobs with Marks & Spencer and the Blyth Iron and Steel Works, and ended up joining the BBC in 1961 as a general trainee, alongside Phillip Whitehead.

Here he received the usual catholic training, and worked in radio under René Cutforth and Louis MacNeice, before being given his first job in television by the editor of *Monitor*, Humphrey Burton. He joined the programme on the same day as Patrick Garland; Huw Wheldon was presenter, and Ken Russell chief film director. Later he moved to production work on *Writer's World*, *New Release*, *Bookstand*, and *Take It or Leave It*, but all the time continuing to write, completing seven novels before he was confident enough to publish one. At 27, with two published novels behind him and, in his own words, cocky enough to think he could push off, he drew the £273 owing to him in the BBC pension fund, and went freelance. He financed his fiction by writing film-scripts: *The Music Lovers* for Russell, *Isadora* for Karel Reisz, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The early novels which this work underwrote contain a fair amount of familial dues-paying – 'I had to put my parents, and my grandparents, on the fictive shelf': and Bragg, who was starting after the first fashionable wave of Northern

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working-class novelists, and whose work was conspicuously lacking in both social aggression and sexual grunt-and-groan, received the kind of reviews, respectful but not heated, which have become his lot.

Freelancing, however, had its drawbacks: Bragg found, not least, that the solitude of writing imposed a severe strain. Other sadnesses and troubles – including the death of his first wife – disturbed this seven-year period. He ran into tax problems; he discovered the painfully lowly status accorded to the writer by the film industry; and he had his first experience of presenting a television show, a Manchester flop called *Somewhere Up There*.

Bragg's achievements since that time are both impressive and important. For ten years, from the early Sixties, there were simply no books programmes on television; while the concept of interviewing a writer remained frozen at ten minutes' chatter plus the odd shot of him wandering self-consciously round his house, trying to look as if he were thinking. Now, with *Second House* and *The Lively Arts*, the idea of interviewing a major writer (like Bellow, Singer, Mailer) at a potentially profitable length of up to 90 minutes is at least established in the minds of programme planners and viewers as something which can be done, and done productively. Such a breakthrough always looks obvious after it has happened; less often before.

Bragg's second achievement is to succeed, almost single-handed, in getting a book programme on BBC-1. *Read All About It* is wholly Bragg's creation; he edits it, introduces it, and has a large part in choosing who appears on it. He is touchy about criticism, and tends to threaten you with transcripts as soon as he senses doubt. This, however, is understandable, since Bragg sees the programme in some ways as being an extension of himself, and the two main assumptions of the show, both fundamentally populist, can be traced directly to his own beliefs. These are, first, his stated view that everyone's opinion of a book is interesting; and, second, a sort of broad, optimistic belief that books are *per se* a good thing, so that the whole question of Books on BBC-1 becomes an evangelical issue, rather like the fluoridisation of water. Thus a tension exists between the programme's basic job-description – to provide critical reception for books – and the demands of television for it to be a show, i.e. generate novelty arising from more than just the different fortnightly choices of books. Hence painful sights of the Joe-Bugner-on-Chomsky variety, and the actresses who begin, 'Well, I don't actually read this sort of book, Melvyn, but . . .' This tendency can only be heightened by Bragg's ultimate plans for the show: in two years he hopes to turn it from a late-night show watched by 2½-3½ million into an earlier-evening programme attracting 'massive' audiences.

Bragg admits that *Read All About It* by itself would provide a service to books which would be 'thoroughly inadequate' without the ballast of longer programmes on BBC-2; furthermore, he views the balance between the two channels as a function of the responsibility which he feels personally to viewers. This self-identification with his programmes, coupled with a certain imperviousness to irony, results in an edginess over criticism (not to mention a habit of feeding the words 'interview' and 'profile' into his linguistic unscrambler and coming up with 'assassination plot'). Indeed, for such a variedly successful man (and one who is, at bottom, very sure of himself) he offers a considerable lack of surface confidence. Even after eight published novels, he admits to nervousness about writing fiction.

There is still a lot of Melvyn Bragg to come – he expects to produce his best fiction over the next ten years – but it will not necessarily be in predictable fields. At present he gives himself another three years in television; but things might change more quickly. Bragg is a solid middle-of-the-road Labour Party man whose political views, he claims quaintly but attractively, haven't changed since he was 14. He has a deep attachment to his roots, no lack of ambition, and a certain strain of hortatory bonhomie. No one reading the editorial matter in *Speak for England* can fail to notice the proud, full, optimistic patriotism voiced in it. Politics would not be an extraordinary pursuit for such a man. Phillip Whitehead's example beckons; and Bragg is certainly Cumbria's favourite son, even though, in the days of his first appearances on *Second House*, Wigtonians used to watch glumly and ask at the end, 'Do we get a medal?' His literal first memory is of sitting in the fourth row of the Temperance Hall in Wigton and listening to his mother read the treasurer's report to the local Labour Party meeting. It would perhaps be neither surprising, nor wholly inappropriate, for a man who has represented the people of Cumbria for 15 years in fiction to end up representing them in Parliament.

Donald Gould

Mr Benyon's Gift

One of the less happy consequences of the Liberals' deal with the Callaghan Administration is that William Benyon's miserable Abortion (Amendment) Bill has survived to go to committee, and, presumably, come up for Third Reading. It *is* a miserable Bill, not just because it sets out to deprive women of a hard-won amelioration of their too often burdensome lot, but also because it is the dishonest instrument of a ruthless campaign to impose a minority view upon the whole of society.

The Bill is presented as a means for 'tidying-up' the Act of 1967, and for preventing some of the abuses which have undoubtedly occurred. It has been put forward as a humane effort 'to improve the standard of counselling and medical attention which they [women with unwanted pregnancies] receive'. This last statement was made in a letter from William Benyon to a woman who had written to him asking that he think long and deep before supporting measures which could result in a return of evils which have happily largely disappeared since 1967, and is typical of the smooth and moderate manner in which Mr Benyon has presented his case.

It is, presumably, this carefully cultivated appearance of sweet reason which accounts for the surprising fact that the Bill was given a second reading by 170 votes to 132 in the House of Commons a few weeks ago. The vote was surprising because in 1967 David Steel's Bill reforming the then Draconian abortion law was approved by a vote of 167 to 83. It is difficult to believe that the opinion of the House has so altered over the past ten years that a return to pretty well the same situation as that which existed before 1967 is now felt desirable by a majority of Members. It seems far more likely that Members had been persuaded that they were, indeed, approving in principle changes in the law designed solely to put an end to taxi touts, the commercial trade in high-priced, quick-and-sloppy, compassionless, cash abortions on foreign women, and similar practices never envisaged by the Steel Bill.

But William Benyon is by no means the moderate he may seem, and would not be content with such modest and desirable reforms. He was on the platform at the inaugural meeting of a branch of SPUC (the militant Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) established in his own constituency, and there declared himself an 'absolutist' in his opposition to abortion, 'and proud of it'. Sonja Ruehl, a member of the Social Science Department at the Open University, was one of a group of six of Mr Benyon's constituents who met him a few days before the Second Reading of his Bill to argue the case for retaining the present law. She reports that when asked to answer awkward questions, he 'got rattled', and declared that in his view abortion amounted to murder. He further stated that on this particular issue he was answerable only to his own conscience and didn't care what his constituents thought. And, revealingly, he said: 'I suppose you're the kind of people who'd come to me to talk about capital punishment.'

So why is a man holding such strong views wasting the rare chance offered by a Private Member's Bill on proposals which would do no more than 'tidy-up' the law, and offer 'greater protection to doctors and nurses involved in abortion situations', and 'protect women from abuse and exploitation'? The answer is, of course, that he isn't. His Bill, apparently so reasonable and mild when read clause by clause would, as a whole, so increase the number of offences, and so increase the paper-work demanded, and create so many pitfalls for everybody concerned in any way with the termination of pregnancies, that a large number of doctors, sympathetic to the present law, might, for their own safety, decide to steer clear of abortion work altogether. Invaluable charities such as the Pregnancy Advisory Services, would be severely hampered in their activities, or might be put out of business altogether. Certainly thousands of women, of a kind who are now legally helped each year, would be forced to go through with unwanted pregnancies.

But never mind, for as Mr Benyon is reported to have said: 'If a woman doesn't want to keep the child herself, she can give it to others.'

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Robin Cook

Challenge to Security

Last autumn chief executives of every Scottish local authority, already harassed by the unprecedented crisis in local government finance, found on their desks no fewer than five separate circulars from the Scottish Office on what to do in the event of nuclear attack. These form a small part of the prodigious stream of circulars which has flowed from central government over the past five years exhorting the new local authorities to prepare for nuclear war. They are related to the adoption in Nato States of a doctrine on Civil Defence known as the 'Stay-Put' strategy, which holds that the best thing the civilian population can do is ride out the storm at home.

Former plans for Britain had embraced the possibility of evacuation and even total clearance of the population from the most heavily affected areas. However, those proposals date back to 1956, when the arsenals of even the superpowers were comparatively modest, and are rendered obsolete by two decades which have been dedicated to acquiring multiple overkill. There, quite simply, will now be no safe havens to which the population can be cleared: 'The present assumption is that over a large part of the country there would be no relatively safe areas readily accessible to those who found themselves in the worst affected places. People wishing to move could rarely be given sensible advice on how or where they could safely go.'

The problem is expressed in terms of the period after attack, but in practice the real dilemma for the authorities will present itself at the moment when onslaught appears imminent. It is then that the population of the cities is likely to rise up as one and seek to escape their fate. The difficulty for the authorities is that this flood of 'people wishing to move' would render the roads impassable for military operations and for the movement of those personnel whose evacuation *had* been approved. Consequently there is a school of thought (if that is the appropriate phrase) which contends that when attack is imminent the police must act to seal off the major escape routes from the conurbations – the minor ones can be left to choke up by themselves. Thus the paradox could emerge of British security forces acting to retain those civilian targets which had been selected by the Soviets.

Such residents will however receive an official booklet with the bracing title *Challenge to Survival*. In the long tradition of such publications this booklet provides advice on how to use sandbags and bookshelves to create the 'fall-out room', within which the kitchen table or the cupboard under the stairs should be incorporated as the 'inner refuge'. The recipients may be forgiven for considering some of the advice redundant: 'If you live in a block of flats five storeys high or more, do not shelter in the top two floors.'

The presentation is reassuring, almost soothing (the recommended first-aid kit consists of aspirins, Elastoplast and vaseline). Only occasionally does it betray the nature of the aftermath for which it is providing guidance: 'If a death occurs while you are confined to the fall-out room place the body in another room and cover it as securely as possible. *Attach an identification.* You should receive radio instructions on what to do next.'

The reader with an analytical cast of mind is likely to be troubled most by the discovery that although the first page identifies three dangers from nuclear explosion – Heat, Blast and Fall-out – the subsequent 25 pages deal almost solely with how to avoid fall-out. The copious advice on fall-out is likely to appear academic to the citizens of the conurbations who are to be consumed by heat and blast against which, by implication, once again no sensible advice can be offered.

The point is rubbed home by January's circular to health authorities which is the latest in the series. This recommends that medical staff should be dispersed from urban hospitals on the humanitarian consideration that 'trained staff are the most valuable asset possessed by the Health Service and could be replaced only in the very long term'. It is not, of course, that everything caught within such urban areas is likely to be destroyed. Dear me, no. It is just that 'central urban areas could become *isolated* in the event of attack'.

To permit this dispersal of staff the circular provides for a parallel discharge of patients. It anticipates that in a period of crisis something of the order of 70 per cent of maternity cases, 60 per cent of acute cases and 70 per cent of sick children would be 'returned to the community'. To reduce organised resistance to discharges on this scale the draft emergency legislation will provide the Secretary of State with powers to suspend the Community Health Councils.

A curious aspect of this new Stay-Put doctrine is that its adoption coincides with the promotion in America by the Civil Defence Preparedness Agency (yes, truly) of a programme which envisages the mass evacuation of populations living next to the probable military targets of a nuclear strike. It is hoped that in this way deaths from a 'limited nuclear war' could be kept under 17 million – or something like the combined populations of Scotland, Wales, Ulster *and* Greater London. The calculations depend on the critical assumptions that; (a) the US would have three clear days warning of any Soviet strike; (b) the Russians would not accelerate their attack when they observed the target areas rapidly emptying; and (c) Russia shares the Pentagon's fascination with the concept of a limited nuclear war even though she does not possess the same ability to wage it.

A by-product of any such evacuation would be that the American President would have little option but escalation, since the disappearance of a large chunk of his industrial workforce would cripple a conventional war effort and anyway if there is going to be a nuclear holocaust it had better come before the bunkered population gobbles its way through its fortnight's rations.

So long as the potential enemy possesses nuclear weapons there is of course a case for contemplating what we could do if he were actually to drop them. However, since it has been reported by reliable sources that Nato is anxious to encourage member states 'to appropriate more funds to this sphere' we should first reflect on a number of dangers inherent in any Civil Defence preparations.

First, it offers a psychological escape from facing up to the reality of nuclear war. *Challenge to Survival* advises its reader if he has a home fire extinguisher to 'keep it handy'. One can only assume such homely suggestions are made more to maintain morale before the megaton bursts than for their practical value when it happens. Clearly some sort of process of collective anaesthesia stole over the committee who drafted circular Es (Scot) 3/1975 which solemnly warns chief executives that 'in the post-attack period . . . schools, libraries and parks would not be operating as in more normal times'.

Secondly, by providing at least psychological defence mechanisms against the reality of nuclear war, such preparations can make it more thinkable and therefore more likely. It is striking that the Pentagon's renewed interest in mass evacuation should follow the official adoption of a targeting strategy which embraces military installations, such as missile silos, as well as the customary civilian objectives. Both instruments have been fashioned by men who are more interested in waging nuclear war than in deterring it.

Lastly, since Civil Defence means in essence preparing for nuclear war, an effective programme may heighten tension by convincing the enemy that you are intending nuclear war. It must be said that both British and American programmes are a long way off being effective. Nevertheless, it is always instructive to note how much more sinister the mirror activities of the other side appear to us, and in the past year many Western commentators have produced exceedingly generous estimates of Soviet Civil Defence capability as evidence that Russia is ready for war.

The danger is illustrated succinctly, if unwittingly, by no less an authority than John Davis, director of the American Civil Defence programme, who recently warned: 'It appears the Soviets believe they could hold their casualties to around 5 per cent of their population . . . Whether they are right in their analysis is less important than if they *think* they are right. If they perceive a real or imagined great disparity between their ability to absorb nuclear punishment and ours, it makes a nuclear war more likely.' The Soviets might be forgiven for asking why it is only their Civil Defence effort which makes nuclear war more likely.

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London Diary

☐ Easter, for me, will always mean the Aldermaston marches. It seems odd that there are people now adult who ask what it was all about, not to mention students writing theses about the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The marching itself, except on the small country roads between Aldermaston and Reading, was no pleasure; I sometimes felt that I would rather suffer from radioactivity than trudge through Slough again. Only one member of CND's executive committee, Jacquetta Hawkes, invariably walked the whole of the four days, conspicuous in a dashing style of red hat. It was typical of A. J. P. Taylor that, although a strenuous and practised walker in his private capacity – he walked Offa's Dyke when not far short of 70 – he declined to join the Easter crocodile. He even suggested a scheme for financing the Campaign through a mileage tax on non-marchers. I noticed the other day that there is still a chalked slogan on a wall in Harewood Avenue, off Marylebone Road; it says: 'March! Easter Monday, Traf Sq.' I suppose the wall will be demolished sooner or later. Much to my regret, the wall in the same district that said 'Hands off Guatemala' has gone.

☐ Now that all nice, well-meaning people have expressed solemn concern over the size of the National Front vote at Stechford, I hope the right lesson will be learned, above all by those at Transport House who lay down by-election strategy: if you don't campaign positively for racial equality, racists will get votes. Having said that, we ought not to concede the NF's claim to have achieved decisive take-off. If I'd been asked five years ago to predict the consequences of 16 per cent inflation, 1,300,000 unemployed, and a disappointing Labour government, I'd have said: 'The racists will do well out of that lot' – and so would any sensible person. Reliable sociological inquiries regularly tell us that about 15 per cent of the British people are racist in outlook, in the sense that they cherish implacable antagonism to blacks and Asians, and that they feel more strongly about this than about any other issue. By that yardstick, 8 per cent of the poll in the nasty city of Birmingham is no triumph for the National Front. Rather, it indicates a failure to convert racist feeling fully into political terms. One should bear in mind, too, that not all NF voters are true racists; they include many people who wish to show their disillusionment with the major parties by voting for the most promising fringe candidate. If there is a fringe candidate at Grimsby standing on a platform of 'Save our fishing fleets and bomb Reykjavik', I reckon he'll get more votes than the NF did at Stechford.

☐ I've been to the Aldwych Theatre six times (as a paying customer) during the 1976-77 season, now drawing to a close and leaving me with nothing but pleasant memories. A theatrical company, like a newspaper or a publishing house, has its golden periods: the Royal Shakespeare Company is surely at its best. I wasn't crazy about two of the plays I saw – *Wild Oats*, which to my mind has been over-praised, and the Russian stinkeroo, *Old World*, a choice best interpreted as a noble attempt to save the spirit of détente. But, whatever the play, I always had the gratifying sense of a company working perfectly together to produce the best possible results. They're all good friends, these RSC people; they've positively enjoyed all the rehearsals. As I have no backstage knowledge I hope that's true – it is, at all events, the impression they communicate. Another point occurs to me. When the RSC started up in London they lamented having to make do with a crumby old-fashioned theatre like the Aldwych, and dreamed longingly of the glamorous new building at the Barbican (whose construction has been delayed even more than that of the National Theatre). But with the years we've grown to love the Aldwych – tortuous corridors, mysterious draughts and all. What we need is more old theatres, old pubs and old hotels; they ought to build a few. Incidentally, the small coffee-bar at the Aldwych has the best cheesecake in town.

☐ At dinner the other evening conversation among novelists turned to the subject of writing speed. I am neither as fast as some nor as slow as some others; it takes me about six months to write a novel if I'm doing nothing else, or twelve months if I'm giving part of my time to journalism. To my mind there is no inherent virtue either in writing fast or (despite the venerated example of Flaubert) in writing slowly. The difference between the fast writers and the slow writers is that rumination and composition are distinct processes with the former, but contemporaneous with the latter. I start writing very soon after I get my basic idea and work out the problems as I go along, adopting Napoleon's motto: '*on s'engage, puis on voit*'. One of those round the table amazed me with the information that he'd written a 65,000-word novel in a week, but explained that he'd been thinking about it for the previous 18 months. Of course, writers who produce at this speed work a very long day during the intensive stretch, whereas I work the equivalent of normal office hours. Georges Simenon (average writing time, ten days) used to shut himself in his study, undisturbed except for meals brought on a tray, and sleep on a camp-bed there for a few hours a night. Obviously it works, but I couldn't do it.

☐ Once again I applaud Denis Healey for exempting pipe tobacco from the tax increases on cigarettes. I suspect, however, that he is the victim of legend – aided by popular fiction and TV serials – in supposing that it's mainly old men who smoke pipes. Pipe addicts, such as Harold Wilson, J. B. Priestley and Mervyn Jones, have been pipe addicts all their lives, and young ones are coming along all the time. A letter in *The Times* accuses Healey of sex discrimination, but I've never understood why women haven't taken to the pipe. The risk of lung cancer is less, and women are usually more sensible; you don't get nicotine stains on your fingers; and a pipe is a most attractive accessory. If women smoked pipes I imagine that the standard of design, already high, would improve still further. In all my life I've encountered only two female pipe-smokers, one English and one American. They were both young and pretty, and they both looked charming when they lit up. Can they be the only ones wishing to overcome feelings of pipe-envy?

☐ I'm hoping to meet the militant feminist who, like me, waits for eastbound Central Line trains at Tottenham Court Road. Last week a cinema poster, advertising *Jackson County Jail*, showed a girl prisoner cowering in a cell while a brutal-looking warder stood at the door, his intentions obvious. Across it the militant had written 'Male sexual fantasising'. This week there's a poster for *Joseph Andrews*. There he stands, blandly complacent, while girls nestle at his feet and cling to his legs. The comment: 'This degrades women.' Today I think I spotted her, though she'd tucked away her red crayon. She is beautiful, looks strong and athletic, wears a sort of khaki uniform and combat boots. Now I'm writing about her I realise – and how it would annoy her! – that she's becoming my own sexual fantasy. This paragraph must now cease.

☐ We're already receiving 'This England' entries which, deserving though they are, are being put in temporary storage. They tell of phenomenally English schemes for celebrating the Jubilee; and we hope, when the time comes, to publish a 'This Jubilee' collection. More will be welcome – usual prizes, of course. For myself, I missed the Coronation and I intend to miss the Jubilee. In addition to my republican sentiments, I'm influenced by the pouring rain that the Queen seems to attract on great occasions. Her wet record has been maintained, I notice, during her recent trip to New Zealand and Australia. On Coronation Day I walked along the Seine from Freneuse to Muids. I still remember the headline in next day's paper: '*Stoïques sous les Averses, les Anglais Accueillent leur Reine.*' On Jubilee Day I expect to be walking in the Fruska Gora. You don't know where the Fruska Gora is? That's fine.

Mervyn Jones

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Corporation bus crews in Nottingham could not understand why the same violin was left on buses once a fortnight for two months and had to be claimed at the lost-property office. An official explained yesterday that it belonged to a little girl who did not want to go to music lessons. After paying the lost-property charge for the fourth time her father said: 'She will learn the violin even if it kills me.' – *The Times* (Henry Blunden)

☐ Amendment to the register: The title of the film 'Snow White And The Seven Perverts' (BR/E 37078/14/10/78), registered on 10 October 1973, has been amended to 'One Day My Prince Will Come'. – *Trade and Industry* **(John Richardson)**

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Yvonne Roberts

The Entertainer

It's 5.30 on a Wednesday afternoon in Cardiff. The star that night of the Ty Side Working Men's Club, a half-hour's drive away, is sitting comfortably, so he begins. 'Spanish omelette, chips and a pot of tea, please love', he asks the waitress. His gold identity bracelet weighs heavy on the table. 'I don't like substitutes', he says. 'If I can't have sheepskin, I don't want simulated. That's why I like this place. It's olde worlde. I often come here for a spot of tea before a show.' The Muzak changes from Vivaldi to Simon and Garfunkel.

Johnny Tudor is 44. He was born in the Rhondda. His grandfather was a miner, his parents were in 'The Business'. So is Johnny Tudor. For 17 years, after a false start in John Colliers, the tailors to watch, he has been a song-and-dance man, a professional entertainer. At the outset, he says, he was lucky if he got £5 a go. His first engagement at 17 was in a Manchester boxing ring in between bouts. He had rehearsed for a year with a flat-footed tap dancer, a mate of his dad's. 'I don't remember whether they liked us or not,' he says. 'I only remember that I thought I'd cracked it. I was Sammy Davis Jr at the Copacabana.'

This month he begins a ten-week run in cabaret in Australia. £350 a week 'all found', plus a suite in a five-star hotel and a chaffeur-driven car. It is reliability and reputation, he says, which ups his price a little each year. Next comes a summer season for Pontins in the West Country (£200 a week), after that a fortnight's autumn holiday in the Dragonara Hotel in Malta where he will sing for his supper – breakfast and lunch. And finally it's back for a fifth season at the Porthcawl Pavilion in pantomime. The impresario? Ogwr Borough Council – and quite nicely they do out of it too, Johnny Tudor says. So, he adds, does he. It's not quite the Copacabana, but it will do.

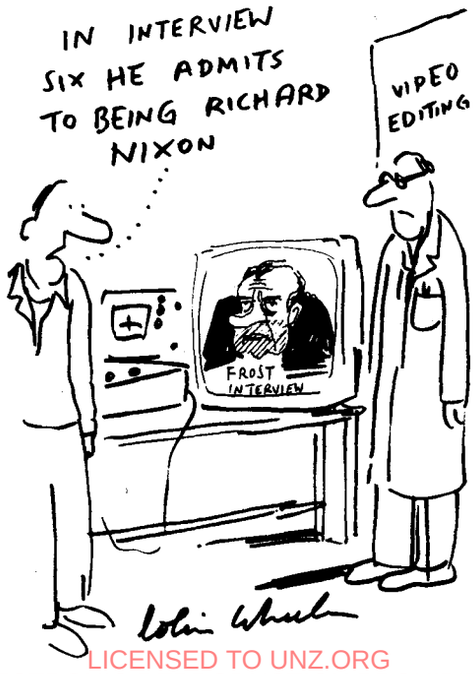
In between the block bookings, Johnny Tudor fits in the one-night stands where he who barters best dictates the rate for the job. Private parties pay out £200 and more, working men's clubs in the North and local authorities organising nights of civic splendour in the South, prefer to haggle. 'I weigh it up,' Johnny Tudor explains. 'I may ask £100, they offer £75. We settle for £80 – and a few quid extra for the pianist and drummer.'

It may all sound a lot, he adds, as he anoints the newly arrived omelette with brown sauce, but with gaps of no work and expenses to meet, it comes to about £6,000 in a good year, half that in a bad year. Now a family man with a divorce pending, Johnny Tudor has a bit in the bank, an Opel, a three-bedroomed house 'done Regency style' and the cash to indulge in his preference for the best now and then.

Johnny Tudor looks as if he carries a high price-tag, some might even call him flash. He resembles an economy-size version of Frankie Vaughan. A similarity, he says, which has got him out of trouble too often to knock. 'If I start to lose an audience. If I see one fag light up on the floor then another,' he says, 'I shove on a boater, kick my leg up in the air and some old girl in the audience is sure to scream. Then I've got them back. It rarely fails.' On one of the occasions when it did Johnny Tudor escaped through a lavatory window. It was not, he says, a high point in his career.

Johnny Tudor Griffiths's career began, in fact, at the age of 14 when he saw Roy Castle on the telly. Inspired, Johnny pursuaded an auntie (his life is liberally sprinkled with aunties) to teach him how to tap, his dad helped on piano, he nicked other people's jokes and the local operatic company came in handy for his voice. Since then he's become polished. He has done the rounds of American bases, cruises ('No, they don't all drop their knickers when they get on board'), variety and summer seasons. 'The key to a good act,' Johnny Tudor says, now like a man revealing the password under duress, 'is tempo.'

The tempo may change in Johnny Tudor's act, sections can be lopped off or extended at will, but the overall strategy remains unchanged. It is a trap designed to ensnare even the most *blasé* of boozers. He begins up tempo on a neutral song, he explains carefully, and slows down to a ballad. Then off comes his jacket and bow-tie (the suit is, of course, 'the best' grey water silk, costing £250 – 'If it's good enough for Bruce Forsyth,' he says, 'it's good enough for me'). Then comes a couple of verses of *The Entertainer*, leading naturally into a dance routine, a few jokes and his impressions. The false eyelash, he says, *always* falls off 'spontaneously' in the middle of his version of Dorothy Squires because the audience likes to be in on a joke – and he always stops to laugh at himself during a Tom Jones gyration – 'the only man', he adlibs, 'to wear his trousers out from the inside'. A slow number and on 'Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone' a fast exit. 'Except of course,' says Johnny Tudor, 'I come back. It's a false "tab", a false ending. I always do another couple of songs due to the overwhelming response. It's because I keep changing the pace,' he explains, 'that I keep the audience on their toes. I know it all so well, it's almost like a factory job, but I still love it.'



Johnny Tudor, like most on his beat, has had more than one flirtation with fame. He began with the cliché of a five-year recording contract, made it a couple of times on *Family Favourites*, appeared at the London Palladium and even grazed briefly on the Greene pastures of *Opportunity Knocks*. Then he won a medal. 'I won the gold for Britain in the 1970 Gibraltar Song Festival' he says. 'Don Short gave me a full page in the *Daily Mirror* and I thought "this time, I *must* have arrived". But the next week,' he adds smiling at himself, 'I was back in Barnsley on £50 a week. Just one of a thousand.'

A week ago, Johnny Tudor says suddenly on a more serious note, he woke up to the thought that he really, after all, might *not* crack it. He actually might never appear at the Copacabana. 'It's the image, you see.' The ice-cream arrives and at that point in the conversation it is, unfortunately, not encouraging; tinned fruit cocktail and blood-red syrup. The contents make him, temporarily, even more morose. 'If I'm going to make it, it's got to be now. I look after myself, I jog, I don't drink – but if I don't watch it, I'll start to look like some of the others up there performing – held together by string.' The self-doubt, it seems, is a touch of entertainer's enema; necessary to keep the system going. Most performers, he says, inflict it on themselves – but it's a new experience for him.

At 10.20 that night, long after the bingo is over, long after the comedian ('I like these ladies with their dumplings boiling over') and the clarinettist have done, Johnny Tudor makes his entrance. The club, jutting out of a concrete and glass council estate like a hull of a stranded liner, is full. The audience is restless. The ladies are visiting the loo in trios, the barmaids are busy pulling pints and making their own entertainment. 'We get,' says one barmaid, shoving a pasty into the microwave oven, 'BBC 2 on this too.' The men laugh wearily.

The stage is stamp size, decorated like a post-war living room – patterned wall paper and heavy curtains. The lighting is poor, the special effects are minimal, no rising stage or spangled props, just a blackboard with the message: 'Please Don't Take Your Beer on the Dance Floor.' But ten minutes after Johnny Tudor's opening song, the audience is caught. On the slow, 'American Trilogy,' not a cigarette is lit, not a murmur made. The audience, at the finale, want more. A half-dozen middle-aged women clamour for his autograph. 'That's what I like about this business,' Johnny Tudor says, happily sipping a lager later, 'you never know who's going to be in the audience. Tom Jones's agent could have been visiting his auntie tonight . . . That's it. Tuppence one day, a million the next.' The tone is hopeful.

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First Person

Arthur Marshall

Hip Hip Hurrah

'Where's the happy little sand-boy that I used to know?' a wonky master at my preparatory school once wistfully asked me in a week when I was looking, for a change, sad and moody. It was in December 1923 and the incident is, like so many in childhood, still perfectly clear to me. I was emotionally much cast down by the death, at the age of 24, of an actress of brilliant promise called Meggie Albanesi, news of which had just reached me via the *Daily Mail*, a newspaper taken for us because it contained a popular comic strip featuring a mouse called Teddy Tail. Miss Albanesi was extremely highly rated by both critics and the public and there is a bust of her in the St Martin's Theatre (you can take in *The Mousetrap* at the same time). 1923 had anyhow been theatrically a disastrous year, for in March Sarah Bernhardt had gone, and she I felt to be almost a personal friend, having seen her a few years before in a dramatic sketch at the Coliseum, even though it was more or less by mistake (we had gone to enjoy a famous troop of Chinese acrobats, who all stood on top of each other). But there she was, an old lady with frizzy hair lying on a sofa and gabbling incomprehensibly. I think it must have been a wartime 'charity performance' in aid of wounded soldiers and the Red Cross. It was not at the time apparent that she had only one leg, and I am sorry to report that one longed for her to shut up so that we could get to the tumblers.

By the age of ten I knew, such was my keenness, the names of every leading performer on the English stage, and a number of foreigners besides, together with a good deal of fancy, and doubtless invented, stuff about what seemed to be their enchanting private lives, dished up attractively with photographs in the weekly *Sketch and Bystander* ('By the by, buy the *Bystander*' the advertisements encouraged). So, despite these shattering deaths, I cheered up fairly sharply by thinking of Phyllis Dare and Charles Hawtrey and Beatrice Lillie and soon regained my sand-boy status, upon which, I regret to say, the schoolmaster became a good bit less wistful and more practical in his attentions.

When not happily in a theatre, my spare time was spent 'devouring', as they say, theatrical information and literature of every kind. The appallingly precarious nature of the profession was made known to all by the amounts of money that some theatre people left. There was the hugely successful Oscar Asche who wrote, and acted in, the record-breaking *Chu-Chin-Chow* and who departed this life a mere £20 to the good. There was Nijinsky (dotty, and £31). W. Graham Browne, Marie Tempest's husband, scraped together £441. Poor Davy Burnaby, the genial chairman of the unforgettable *Co-optimists*, only rang the bell at £21. One longed to know more about the actual acting but, even when I was young, the biographies and autobiographies of the great seemed to me poorly done, and I now realise that there are few things harder to write. One learned so little of value: it was all largely domestic tosh.

Every now and then, however, there were helpful hints to be garnered. To the New Theatre, Cambridge, there came in the late 1920s the famous theatrical touring company of Sir Frank Benson, mobile nursery of so many fine players and specialising in the plays of Shakespeare (apart from anything else, no author's percentage to have to shell out). Sir Frank was indeed, to borrow Miss Gingold's description of the late Sir Donald Wolfit, a *force de tour*. He seemed to us undergraduates unbelievably ancient and I see now that, born in 1858, he must have been 70. This did not prevent him, game to the last, from playing Hamlet.

In black tights and tottering about fencing with Laertes, he made a most alarming spectacle and one had to avert one's gaze from his shrunk shanks. His youthful mother, Gertrude, looked like his grand-daughter. It was all rather sad and muddling but about a year later he vouchsafed to the world in book form some of the strange secrets of his baffling art, together with tips about how to get on. I have the book still. Breathe deeply 'through eyes, ears, mouth, nose and chin', he counsels. Keep quite tremendously 'fit', like Ellen Terry ('I have seen her spring at the connecting rod between two pieces of scenery as it was being raised to the flies and be whisked up thirty or forty feet, laughing and singing'). Form a rugger team from the company and issue challenges to local sides ('Oh look, Macbeth has scored a try!'). Keep a straight left ready for insults ('Near the Lyceum, a drunkard hissed the words "Bloody aesthete!" '). To assist lissomness, 'practise Chinese sideways kicks with the knee joints flexible'. Sir Frank adds, *à propos de* not very much, that 'next to actors, the lives of country clergy rank highest for insurance purposes'. But of course: the risk of assassination in the vestry following an hour-long sermon, or a nasty tumble down the chancel steps after too conscientiously making sure that the communion wine is at room temperature.

It is left, however, to Mme Bernhardt herself, to bring us in *My Double Life* (1907 originally, but now reissued by Peter Owen at £6.95) the liveliest of theatrical memoirs of the fairly distant past. Though physically unsuitable in some ways, being slender as a needle in those days of bulging bosoms, and with 'hair as curly as a white negress', she had nevertheless the long arms necessary for expansive gestures (you can't get through Racine without them), a magical voice, and the will to win. She is pleasingly truthful about her beginnings and set-backs – second prize only for tragedy at the Conservatoire and in 1862 her début at the Comédie was 'a complete failure'.

It is quite clear from those who saw her in her prime, Maurice Baring among them, that for dramatic talent she was a total knockout and before very long what we have to refer to as tout-Paris was at her gifted feet. 'Hip-hip-hurrah!' they kept going (alas, the name of the original English translator is denied us but here's a greeting to him or her across the years). She cleverly managed to arrange that her so-called private life was no less interesting than her public one. In due course, a male child, source unrevealed, popped out. She took to sleeping in her coffin. She was ever ready to slap a face or to fall senseless to the floor ('I decided therefore to faint'). Wherever she went, she saw to it that 'gossip with its thistle-down wings took flight in all directions'. She met Victor Hugo ('so witty and refined') and was a pioneer in the field of trips by balloon, entering the basket with foie gras, champagne and Prince Jerome Napoleon ('Plon-plon' to close friends) and keeping a firm hand on the controls when the time came to descend ('Kindly open the valve').

She stormed London, the actual storming ('Hip-hip-hurrah!') beginning as far away as Folkestone where Forbes Robertson handed her a gardenia, a crowd of thousands shouted '*Vive* Sarah Bernhardt!' and an armful of lilies and the loudest hip-hip of all came from 'a turbulent young man with luminous eyes and long hair' called Oscar Wilde. Henry Irving provided a bouquet and muted hurrahs. Then, after a triumphant success, and clutching, for one never knew, 'a very prettily chased revolver, ornamented with cats-eyes', she stormed America ('Hip-hip-hurrah for Sarah Bernhardt!'). Here, despite 'unspeakably awful food', there were fresh triumphs and a heart-warming incident. During a gala performance of *La Dame aux Camélias* and just when Marguerite Gautier has seated her guests at the supper table, the entire scenery collapsed on them and their heads, perforating the thin canvas, were held immobile and sticking up out of the debris. Very few star performers would relate such an undignified disaster, let alone find it hilarious. Hip-hip-hurrah indeed.

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Letters to the Editor

An Unjustified Deliverance?

Sir, The statement in your critical editorial (NS 25 March) on the arrangement with the Liberals 'There is . . . no point in maintaining a Labour government if it is effectively paralysed – office, after all, has never been the motive force of Labour politics; the power to bring about change is what matters for socialists' is curiously myopic. Now, while the first objective of a Labour government is to produce change its second objective is to preserve the change that has already occurred. In the present situation where the arithmetic of parliamentary democracy makes the attainment of the first objective impossible it seems to me perfectly honourable and sensible to try to achieve the second.

The Labour government has fulfilled 80 per cent of its manifesto commitments. It has disappointed many of us in following classical right-wing methods to deal with the world economic crisis. Let us remember, however, that a Thatcher government would not just result in Tory economic policies being implemented by Tories instead of socialists. It would also put at peril the advances in industrial relations, employment protection, industrial regeneration, educational opportunity, social services and social security benefits which have been secured in the past decade.

When the alternatives are progress versus the status quo, I will vote for progress. But when they are the status quo versus reaction and regression, then I will vote for the status quo. And I will do so not with the carping criticism of your editorial but with understanding and a huge sigh of relief.

LESLIE WAGNER

2 Grove Road
Pinner
Middlesex

Sir, In your front page article (NS 25 March) you say: 'What finally destroyed the Attlee government of 1951 . . . was also a justifiable conviction on the part of the public that it had lost the will even to attempt to rule.' It always puzzles me how pundits can so confidently tell us after an election why the collective mind did what it did although only days before the election these pundits are making predictions as to how the electorate will vote that are frequently wide of the mark.

To make this sweeping assertion from the 1951 result is even more puzzling as the Attlee government obtained 13,948,385 votes which was 223,967 more than the Tory vote and is the largest vote ever obtained by any party in any election. With more people voting for the Attlee government than any government (or opposition) in our history, how can you say the public were convinced that it had lost the will even to attempt to rule?

JOHN LODGE

24 Endsleigh Grove
Lancaster

The BBC's Regional Voice

Sir, Well may Phillip Whitehead (NS 25 March) concede that 'not all [of the Annan Committee] travelled every yard of the way'. In fact, less than half the members of the Committee spent less than half a day at the beginning of their investigation at the BBC's Regional Television Headquarters in Manchester. Other regions report a similar depth of inquiry. No wonder, then, blatant inaccuracies are stated as facts in a total of five paragraphs that propose the abolition of BBC Regional Television in its present form.

'We consider [the BBC] should abandon the pretence of a competitive local presence in every ITV region' says Annan. 'The theme is pluralism. More outlets . . .' cries Phillip Whitehead in the NS. Whom should the public believe? Not Annan surely. BBC figures in the North West show nightly regional programmes often attracting more viewers than their ITV competitor, one of the richer ITV companies. National figures across the regions as a whole paint a similar picture. And hardly Phillip Whitehead. Leaving regional television to ITV alone can hardly be expected to provide 'more outlets' surely. Incidentally, if northern company executives really do 'ride up from Hampstead', are they honestly the people to whom regional television can be left with any hope or confidence?

There will be deep regret, though, that Mr Whitehead and his committee colleagues will have no further opportunities to meet Morecambe and Wise and Doctor Who. Or, more importantly, BBC Regional Television staff who have been providing a service to millions of people outside London for many years. It is a service which Annan doesn't even guarantee to replace with anything at all. By the way, none of us comes from Hampstead. If Phillip Whitehead thinks we do, our strong impression will have been confirmed – that the Annan Committee never met those people who actually make regional television programmes at all.

DAVID DAVIES

North West Action Committee
BBC Television News
Piccadilly, Manchester

Travelling People

Sir, William Hall's article 'Gypsies, Councils and the Act' (NS 11 March) must have struck a chord with all those who are involved in some way with travelling people. It highlighted the crucial problem of a piece of recent legislation – the 1968 Caravan Sites Act – which does not work in practice. Hailed as a great step forward when it came on to the statute book in 1968, site provision under the Act does not even cover the increase in the traveller population since that date. Even if the Act were now implemented to the letter, the result would be to place an impossible burden on the shire county authorities, and to confine our travelling people to a very small part of the country – that part which would not be designated. The effect of the failure is the creation of a problem not recognised on the scale it should be because it is a problem that is kept moving. All over the country travellers are being threatened with court proceedings, taken to court and moved on by fair means and foul.

There are no easy answers. But one vital and necessary change could make a lot of difference. That change is the provision of central government funds at least to assist, if not make total provision for, the setting-up and running of new sites. Such sites should include a wide range of facilities. It should not be assumed that travelling people all wish to live on permanent sites with expensive (and often inappropriate) facilities. Consultation with travellers may be a novel concept for local authorities, but it is no worse an idea for that.

These suggestions do not tackle the major planning and local objection problems which continually prevent or delay site provision. But they are an attempt to provoke further discussion from all sides, on the eve of the long-awaited report on accommodation for travellers by John Cripps.

BILL FORRESTER
Gypsies' Officer
Minority Rights Group
196 Stapleton Hall Road
London N4

Defence Costs

Sir, Geoffrey Finsberg (Letters 1 April) chides me for not allowing for inflation or changes in the parity of the pound in the figures with which I illustrated the mounting foreign exchange costs of BAOR. I did not allow for inflation as MoD themselves have conceded in written answer that there are too many variables affecting these costs to produce a meaningful series at constant prices, but though I hesitated to enter where they have already retired in defeat, I will now make amends. The *net* foreign exchange cost of BAOR in 1965-66 was £26m. If we apply to this figure the index of increases in costs to public authorities since then (2.9), we come up with £75m. which is the figure around which these costs would now settle if their rise had been in line with inflation. In fact last year the *net* foreign exchange cost of BAOR was £359m, and this year it will exceed £500m.

I did not allow for changes in the exchange rate because there is no point in doing so. Knowing that the parity of the pound has sunk may help us to understand why the foreign exchange costs have risen, but it does not in any way mitigate the real increase in foreign currency which we must purchase. There is, as always, plenty of room for argument over the precise figures, but there can be no dispute over the trend that in the past decade the foreign exchange costs of our German commitments have increased several fold. This is deeply disturbing – especially for a nation whose economy in the same period has been bedevilled by balance of payments deficits – and ought at least to worry the Expenditure Committee.

ROBIN COOK

House of Commons

Ions Charged

Sir, I was interested to read Edmund Ions's article 'York Under Siege' (NS 18 March) concerning the recent occupation of York University's administration building, Heslington Hall. I must admit, I was a little disturbed by the glib tone of the article which showed the apparent contempt of one of York University's more senior academics for the concerns and aspirations of his students, as well as by Mr Ions's blatant disregard of any of the issues which led students at York and elsewhere to take direct action.

Last December, the Government announced its proposals for massive increases in tuition fees. Perhaps Mr Ions was surprised to learn that students were concerned about this and indeed were ultimately prepared to voice their opposition in terms rather stronger than polite entreaties to the Department of Education and Science. But this is jumping the gun, for students are reasonable people. Over 1,000 letters of protest were written to MPs between December and January. We put a lengthy and detailed submission to the university's General Academic Board analysing the effect of the increases and suggesting that if the university was serious in its stated opposition to the fees, then it should take a principled stand by exercising its right to refuse implementation. I cannot recall whether that meeting of the General Academic Board was an occasion on which Mr Ions made one of his somewhat infrequent appearances, but he will probably know that a

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working party was set up to look into possible responses by the university to the government proposals. Students put considerable effort into the tasks of the working party and costed possible forms of non-implementation. However, when the report of the working party was discussed at a subsequent Board meeting, surprise, surprise, the *principle* of the students' proposals was rejected. Students continued to try to get the matter re-opened through various activities including submission of a petition containing the names of 1,300 students and staff, collected during a protest work-in at the library. Surely this time the university would listen to us. Well, we were offered the opportunity to discuss the matter at one of the university's 'advisory' bodies but were told reconvening the General Academic Board was out of the question because of administrative difficulties.

After nearly a week of occupation the General Academic Board met. Tuition fees were discussed and a policy of 'selective non-implementation' adopted, along with a condemnation of the occupation – an academic confirmation that the occupation was in no way the cause of the change of heart. Perhaps they were right. Possibly the vaguely worded commitment to 'selective non-implementation' was seen as a way of ending the occupation without major concessions. I hope not, because Mr Ions and his friends will probably find that in the event of the university's words coming to nothing then three times as many students will be back inside Heslington Hall.

RICHARD BURDEN
President

York University Students' Union
Heslington
York

The Body-Carers

Sir, I was incensed to see the NEW STATESMAN carry a full-page advertisement for Flora margarine (NS 25 March) with the statement; 'Flora is part of healthy eating. And that's why more and more women are choosing it for their men.'

The implication is, of course, that it should be women who must take care of men's bodies. Should a woman in the view of the typical NEW STATESMAN reader, really be burdened not only by her own health but also that of the man or men she is living with? (Even if she does, like Mrs Trudeau, want him to have the body of a 25-year-old at 55.)

NELL DUNN

34 Holmead Road
London SW6

Boyle's Lore

Sir, Your correspondent Nicolas Jacobs at Jesus College, Oxford (NS 25 March) should not take Groucho Marx so seriously – the remark about posterity was an original Irish bull perpetrated by a famous 18th-century nobleman, Member of the old Irish Parliament and office-holder under the Crown. In an Exchequer debate in the 1780s, Sir Boyle Roche favoured pushing some of the load on to the next generation:

> What, Mr Speaker! And so we are to beggar ourselves for fear of vexing posterity! Now, I would ask the honourable gentleman, and this still more honourable House, why we should put ourselves out of our way to do anything for posterity – for what has posterity done for us?

This is the same gentleman who created 'Boyle Roche's Bird' when explaining his absence from a debate because of equally urgent business elsewhere. He is recorded as saying: 'No man could be in two places at once, barring he was a bird.'

The general impression now is that Sir Boyle's 'spontaneous' gaffes were in fact well calculated to ensure that his point would register, as were Sam Goldwyn's in our time. Is it possible that Sam and Groucho did not pluck theirs out of the air, and that Boyle Roche's Bird had a perch in Hollywood too?

ARTHUR NOONAN
Political Editor

Radio Telefís Éireann
Donnybrook
Dublin

The Left and Growth

Sir, Mr Davoll's letter (NS 1 April) is a perfect example of numerate logic leading to utterly unreasonable conclusions. His 'modest' 2 per cent growth would actually result in mineral extraction in 1,000 years' time being well over 500 million times the present level. If he can think of any possible combination of population and production growth that would come to this kind of figure, then he may have a point.

If we take a more reasonable estimate of an *average* extraction of eight times the present level, then Wilfred Beckerman's estimate of 100 million years to exhaust the top mile of the earth's crust is about right.

HARVEY R. COLE

9 *Clifton Road*
Winchester

British Tenors

Sir, In rightly praising John Brecknock for his performance in *Werther* (NS 1 April), John Morgan succeeds in traducing the memory of British tenors of 40 years ago. From the fact that choral tenors in Sheffield were then apparently in short supply, he draws the false conclusion that we lacked solo tenors of note. Heddle Nash (who would, incidentally, have been a superb Werther), Walter Widdop, Henry Wendon, Tudor Davies and David Lloyd were certainly the equal of, if not superior to (at least in technique), the five present-day artists mentioned by Mr Morgan, and had opera houses round the world then been willing to accept the credentials of British singers as they are today, those five would undoubtedly have had international careers.

ALAN BLYTH

11 Boundary Road
London NW8

May Events

Sir, The House Gallery is arranging a loan exhibition of the posters which were made by the *Atelier Populaire* during the May events in 1968. The gallery has already borrowed 50 posters from two private collections. We would very much like to show as many of the posters as possible and would appeal to readers who may own one or more to make them available for the exhibition. Please contact me as soon as possible as the exhibition will run from 1 May to 5 June this year.

JENNY STEIN

House
62 *Regents Park Road*
London NW1

His Own Thing

Sir, Ian Hamilton asks (NS 25 March) if he should take Bruce Jay Friedman's article on Clint Eastwood 'straight' or in some other position. I'd like to help him make difficult aesthetic choices but I'm sure it's better for him to do it by himself.

HENRY FENWICK
Features Editor

Radio Times
35 Marylebone High Street
London W1

About Oxford books

The Tongues of Men

The Tongues of Men, shown last night on BBC2, was based on George Steiner's **After Babel**. Without doubt Dr Steiner's most important work, this book goes to the very heart of man's relation to the word. Quite simply, it probes the mystery of why there should be thousands of mutually incomprehensible tongues spoken – some of them by only a couple of hundred people – on this small planet. When we published **After Babel** two years ago, it received some of the most appreciative, and penetrating, reviews of any book for some time. 'To Steiner,' said Robin Lane Fox in the *Financial Times*, 'words are precious above all else, and by calling up the deeper "structures" of the poet and the writer this remarkable book must be agreed to have driven back the formal linguist from literature's home ground.' Donald Davie, writing in *The T.L.S.*, declared that Steiner was 'saying things we cannot afford not to take note of . . . I greatly admire the intellectual venture which this book represents, so boldly sustained, so vulnerably extended." The *Daily Telegraph* called it 'a masterly and impressive work,' and *Nature* said it was 'magnificent . . . highly personal, stimulating, and infuriating . . . a considerable achievement.' **After Babel**, by George Steiner, is available at £10, or in Oxford Paperbacks at £2.50.

Malcolm Lowry

The new film *Volcano*, which has been showing at the Electric Cinema, has been well received as a thoughtful and accurate portrayal of Malcolm Lowry's desperate life: Russell Davies, writing in *The Observer*, said 'It's the first film for some time that I feel *usefully worse* for having seen.' The film relies largely on the biography by Douglas Day which Oxford published in 1974 – 'an illuminating account of that ridiculously tragic and unforgivably important monster who so generously epitomized all the tortures and failures of his fellow damned' (*The Economist*); 'a brilliant, sympathetic, necessarily sad book, Lowry's first biography and a milestone' (*The Times*). Philip Toynbee called it 'a very considerable achievement'; A. Alvarez thought it 'scrupulous and level-headed'; and Robert Nye, writing in *The Scotsman*, said 'it should be read by all who care about works of genius." **Malcolm Lowry: A Biography**, by Douglas Day, remains available at £5.

Blacks in Film

Slow Fade to Black: The Negro in American Film, 1900 - 1942, by Thomas R. Cripps, is a comprehensive record of films made by blacks, or featuring blacks, or concerned with black subject matter. The story begins with the racist attitudes of *The Birth of a Nation* and the 1920s when there were few film chances for blacks. The 1930s saw the start of black independent production and widening opportunities, and by the Second World War Hollywood had signed an agreement ensuring wider use of blacks both on screen and behind the camera. The book places this record of Negroes on the screen into the broader context of their struggle in American society during these years; a second volume will bring the story up to date. £13.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Stanley Sadie

The Musical Offering

Unfinished Journey by YEHUDI MENUHIN
Macdonald & Jane's £5.95

'My life has been spent in creating utopia', writes Mr Menuhin at the beginning of his final chapter. The remark is characteristic. For Mr Menuhin's own actual world has been close to an ideal one and, being the open, generous, innocent and utterly good man he is, he wants us all to share it.

That particular observation, however, has a special context here: the foundation and the running, since 1963, of the Yehudi Menuhin School at Stoke d'Abernon, which in philosophy could be said to fall somewhere between an English progressive school, a Russian forcing-house for young virtuosos, and an Israeli kibbutz. And that of course represents in itself several basic aspects of Mr Menuhin's own ancestry and life.

It is one of the most remarkable accidents in musical history – except, of course, that nothing of the kind can ever truly be an accident – that nearly all the great violinists over a generation and more were Jews from the Russo-Polish lands. What was it that turned these people, in such numbers and in such an abundance of skill, to the violin? Clearly, for a persecuted people with no homeland or national identity, a strong religious conviction and deep family feeling, living in constant fear of pogroms, the violin's particular character somehow served as a channel for a special kind of emotional expression. And that duly combined with the Jew's traditional (and in evolutionary terms essential) capacity for hard work and total involvement to produce this galaxy of players, among them Elman, Heifetz, Milstein, Oistrakh and Stern. The tradition subsists at every level, not just the most exalted. Mr Menuhin refers to Russian Jews entering Palestine in the 1930s, half of them carrying violin cases; and in Odessa the crowd in his dressing room after a recital came not to shower praises but to inquire about his fingering of particular passages.

Mr Menuhin himself, by what could be called an accident of birth, is not quite a full member of this Russo-Polish (and mostly American) club. He is too young: his parents, both born in the Ukraine, met for the first time in Palestine, then in New York, where they married and defiantly called their first child Yehudi – defiantly because before they had been offered an apartment in a building where, the landlady reassured them, no Jews would be accepted. They soon moved to San Francisco. Menuhin's father, coming from a family of Chassidic rabbis, taught Hebrew [illegible] matter, whose ancestry apparently [illegible] quite clear) included some [illegible] the stronger character in the Jewish matriarchal sense, but also in the Jewish tradition recognised her secondary role.

In fact everything became secondary to Yehudi once it was clear how far his talent was beyond the ordinary. Though he writes knowledgeably and in the best sense lyrically about his early and indeed his pre-natal years – one is surprised to come across a remark like 'when I was about two' after such fullness of what seemed to be recollection – Mr Menuhin says little about the growth in awareness of his genius. Things, it seems, just happened. There was a second prize (second!) when he was five. He went from a routine teacher to Louis Persinger, leader of the San Francisco orchestra, who gave him four or five lessons a week, whom he followed to New York, and who travelled with him on his early tours. His father gave up work to nurture the child genius; it was not exploitation, for the boy's welfare was never sacrificed to fame or riches. His parents had even provided two younger sisters to complete the warm family cocoon. He had one 'bewildered' day at school; firm routines at home, and on tour, helped build in a love of order and regulation.

His début, at seven, left only a 'small mark' on his memory. Then there was Europe: Paris in 1927, an abortive meeting with Ysaÿe (who told him to practise arpeggios) and his successful childish pleas to his beloved and revered Enescu to take him as a pupil; a Berlin début in 1929, in three concertos under Bruno Walter; two summers with Adolf Busch, helping deepen and discipline his musicianship; the 1932 visit to England, recording with Elgar, and later playing under Beecham. In the early Thirties, spent mainly near Paris (though there were regular trips home), he came into contact with all the greatest musicians in Europe – Horowitz, Cortot, Boulanger, Mengelberg, Furtwängler, Toscanini, Monteux. These were his teenage years.

How does one continue a life begun like that? What remains unconquered? Had Mr Menuhin's genius been braked, and his contacts with the real world been let develop more normally, would his great gifts have withered unseen or would they have matured even more fully and consistently than they did? For something, somewhere, did go awry. His short-lived first marriage caused him grief, and he had 'black years' around 1945-47. But I am thinking, simply, of his violin playing, even as it is now. Is it that some new kind of self-consciousness overtook the freedom of his intuitive response? The freedom is not gone; when he is most fully himself he remains peerless. A tale, maybe apocryphal, has been told of his driving, overnight, to some recording studio, playing over the concerto (Brahms?) to sketch out for the conductor his tempos and ideas, then retiring to bed and returning later keyed up to record: but the best takes were those from the playthrough, which the engineers had cannily taped. I recall, from childhood, the multiplicity of thrills from two concerts during his famous first wartime visit; those same thrills were relived, quite lately, at a Sunday evening Albert Hall concert, with the Beethoven concerto noble, serene, exalted, like no one else's. But such occasions are rare: many other memories of Menuhin are marred by imperfections that obscure the unique vision.

The war years forced, or helped, him to communicate more widely. But Mr Menuhin sees his own life as achieving its deepest fulfilment from the time of his happy second marriage, which in 1947 ended the black spell. His life has filled out, his interests burgeoned; and the roots of those interests are easily seen in his childhood. If his protected adolescence had prevented his maturing – finding his own terms of contact with the real world at the right (or rather the conventional) age – he now did so perhaps the more fruitfully. He turned to many good causes, and I use that phrase without cynical quotation marks. Most of all to amity, forgiveness and understanding, both individual and international. He tried to clear Furtwängler from unfair charges of Nazi sympathies; he reconciled Casals and his pupil Cassadò; he arranged David Oistrakh's first visit to America; he scored a notable victory over apartheid in South Africa; and he had Arabs and Israelis meet and talk at the International Music Council. But an innocent, exclusively milk-fed on human kindness, can get only so far: he cannot be tactful, and has met hostility, some in Israel, much in Russian (especially when he mentioned Solzhenitsyn). His worth as an ambassador would anyway vanish if he were a diplomat. He has often been frustrated by Soviet officialdom and is chilled by East Germany, though enjoys warm relations with Hungary and with Romania, Enescu's land.

Perhaps the innocence leads to inconsistencies. He would feed the hungry, but deplores irrigation that leads to loss of flavour; he is against narrow nationalism and its 'stifling' exclusivity, but would (I think) have blacks separately represented in Washington. And he remarks nostalgically on the days when one could manage on a winter's earnings, as if unaware that the other 99 per cent have to manage on far less than that. Some of the musical judgments, on Shostakovich's relationship to Soviet authority, on 12-note composition, on the value of analysis, or on Indian music as a source for the West, are simplistic, as is his equation of authenticity with unemotional music-making (his recent collaboration with Robert Donington, the great champion of expressive authentic playing, has surely told him otherwise).

Many people flit through these pages, and most of them are 'dear', 'much loved' or something of the kind. Mr Menuhin has not just been lucky; he has made his own luck, for goodness is reciprocal. He remembers with happiness virtually everyone – agents, patrons, lawyers, even a couple of critics, and of course dozens of musicians, (with reservations only on Toscanini, not

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for musical failings but for his coarse contempt for others). All this, with a generous portion of lively anecdotes, is presented here, in rather poor typography but in a natural, lucid, quite literary and very endearing style. Mr Menuhin once asks if he is an 'amiable fool'; well, there was once another '*reine Tor, durch Mitleid wissend*', and he too inspired a lot of people with rays of light and hope.

A. J. P. Taylor

Rational Martyr

The Riddle of Erskine Childers: A Biography by ANDREW BOYLE *Hutchinson* £6.95

Who was Erskine Childers? One Erskine Childers was a patriotic upper-class Englishman who served in the Boer war and the Great War and wrote a famous book, *The Riddle of the Sands*, which was both a sensational thriller and a powerful piece of anti-German propaganda. The other Erskine Childers was an uncompromising Irish Republican who was condemned to death by the Free State government as a member of the illegal IRA. It seems impossible that they should both be the same man. But they were. Here is a riddle to delight that accomplished biographer, Andrew Boyle. His last book was on Brendan Bracken, a Catholic Irish Nationalist by birth who turned himself into an English Protestant Tory. His present book is something of the same story, only the other way round. Of course there are differences. Bracken, that man of mystery and invention, destroyed all his records. Childers left a plenitude of evidence both in print and in manuscript. Despite this he remains at the end the more mysterious of the two.

There was nothing in Childers's background to suggest anything unusual. His father was of Yorkshire gentry stock, his mother was Anglo-Irish; his uncle was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Gladstone's government. Losing both parents early in life, Childers found a home with his Anglo-Irish cousins at Glendalough in Wicklow. But there was nothing Irish about this upbringing. This was impeccably English: Haileybury and Trinity College Cambridge. His friends were cool, enlightened Liberals like himself: Walter Runciman, G. M. Trevelyan, Eddie Marsh. Tennyson was his literary idol:

> There is hardly a good aspiration or a good motion in me which has not either been heightened or originated by him . . . Such a life, such a life's work, and such a death are a treasure of unimaginable value to all English-speaking people.

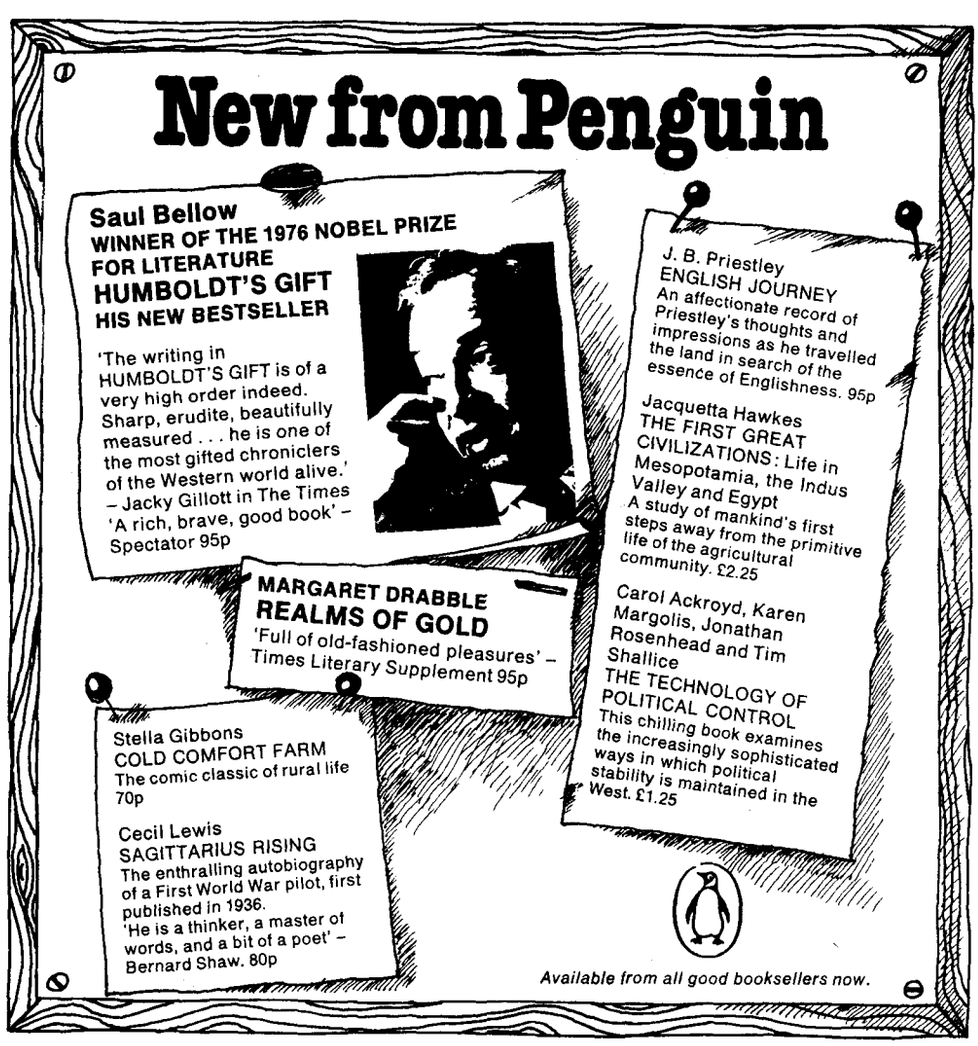
Childers adopted the most conventional of careers and became a clerk in the House of Commons, a post that suited perfectly his orderly, disciplined mind.

There was also an adventurous side to him. He was an accomplished yachtsman – hence *The Riddle of the Sands*, which derived from his exploration of the islands off the Dutch coast. He volunteered for the Boer War and had a gallant career. His experiences there made him critical of British generals and sympathetic towards the Boers. After it he aspired to enter politics as a staid Liberal. In this he was unsuccessful. His first interest in Irish affairs came in as a side wind from his sympathy with the Boers. This interest remained remote until the revived controversy over Home Rule. Ulster gun-running seemed to him unfair. He decided to run guns for the Irish Nationalists and did so successfully. Significantly all his crew, male and female, had an Anglo-Irish background except for his American wife, who in time became as passionately Irish as he was.

The Great War brought Childers back on a patriotic course. His expert knowledge made him invaluable over the somewhat fanciful plan of a British expedition to seize and hold the island of Borkum. Later he went to the Dardanelles and then to the western front. He was a skilled map reader, first with motor boats and then with aircraft. His deeds of gallantry were rewarded by the DSC. At the end of the war he was the close adviser of Trenchard, another of Boyle's heroes, in planning the bombing of Germany. His reputation as an outstanding fighting man was secure. This was not all Childers did during the war. He served on the abortive Plunket commission which sought an agreed solution of the Irish question. By now he himself favoured Dominion Home Rule for Ireland, a respectable enough programme.

After the war Childers sought a new Byronic adventure. He and his wife moved to Dublin and took up the cause of Sinn Fein. He became the political adviser and publicist of Sinn Fein. De Valera regarded him as 'the model of all I'd wish to have been myself'. In 1919 Childers voiced the claims of Ireland at the Paris peace conference. In 1921 he rose higher. He went to London as secretary of the Irish delegation that negotiated the Irish settlement with Lloyd George. Here his training as clerk in the House of Commons asserted itself. The Irish delegates thought in terms of high principle and political realities. Childers looked after the commas. His own position was simple: Sinn Fein stood for an Irish Republic embracing all 32 counties, hence anything that derogated from this was unacceptable. For him, as for DeValera, the treaty which instituted a Free State for 26 counties only was a betrayal and must be rejected.

This was the decisive moment of his life. Where once he had been a patriotic Englishman he now became an Irish rebel, rebelling not only against the British government but against the established Irish government as well. The opposition of this 'damned Englishman', as Arthur Griffith called him, exasperated the Irish supporters of the treaty. Though Childers took no active part in the republican insurrection, he came to symbolise all the extremism and irrationality of the IRA. Andrew Boyle writes: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Childers's very Englishness, the air of indefinable superiority which, according to critics, he exuded like a smell that stank in good Irish nostrils, had not been the least of his handicaps, the greatest being his temerity.

A Dublin friend remarked, 'It was his sniff of disdain which got him killed.'

When arrested Childers was holding a little souvenir revolver Michael Collins had given him. This was enough. Childers was shot on the order of the Free State government in November 1922. Andrew Boyle puzzles why this happened. He writes: 'Childers's potential greatness was marred by an ungovernable tendency to stand in his own light and confound even those who knew and loved him best.' Sean O'Faolin said that 'he was what the Russians call a "fatal" character and the shadow of his doom was over him from the first'. I find this somewhat mystical and perhaps characteristically Irish.

The true explanation is perhaps more straightforward. Childers regarded the treaty as untidy and that was enough for him. He gave his life as a protest against slovenly drafting. He was not a martyr to romance; he was a martyr to rationalism, a grave fault indeed in the world of politics. Childers's last request to his son, who subsequently became President of the Republic of Ireland, was: 'If ever you go into Irish politics, you must not speak of my execution in public.' The son never did. Andrew Boyle has at last done justice to Erskine Childers even if he has not wholly solved the riddle. Perhaps Childers himself could not have done that.

Christopher Hill

Godly Party

Servant of the Cecils: The Life of Sir Michael Hickes by ALAN G. R. SMITH *Cape* £7.50

For over 50 years, from the accession of Elizabeth I to 1612, England was run by the Cecils. When William Cecil, Lord Treasurer and Lord Burghley, died in 1598, his son Robert was already Secretary of State; he too became Lord Treasurer in 1608, having been created Earl of Salisbury three years earlier. From 1573 Michael Hickes was a trusted and responsible servant of the elder Cecil; he became a friend and close associate of the younger. Dr Smith's modest but competent biography thus takes us into the back corridors of power in late 16th and early 17th century England.

There are few surprises in his story, but much fascinating detail. The salaries of great officials were laughably small, and never adjusted for inflation; it was assumed that they would be complemented by fees and gratuities. Exactly when the latter shaded off into bribes was perhaps a difficult question for men to answer in the 16th century; it is impossible today. Government servants expected to profit handsomely from the tenure of office – ministers who have had a good press from historians, like Burghley, Cecil and Strafford, no less than adventurers like the Duke of Buckingham. The confidential servants of the great naturally got their rake-off.

Gratuities were supposed to be 'reasonable'. When in 1609 Hickes was offered £1,000 by a man who wanted to become Dean of Salisbury, this seems unreasonably large. Fourteen years earlier the Rev. Toby Matthew had offered Burghley only £100 for the rich bishopric of Durham – and he got it. We do not know whether Hickes would have succumbed to the temptation, as the Dean who was prematurely thought to be moribund lived for another 10 years, surviving Hickes.

Hickes was an admirably placed fixer, who could make or mar a client's suit. He certainly made a lot of money, though Dr Smith wisely does not attempt to quantify his takings. Government officials and courtiers also used Hickes as a broker through whom loans could be raised in the city: £200 for Francis Bacon for six months in 1601, £500 for Fulke Greville in 1603, a 'good sum' for the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury in 1609. Hickes was also a money-lender on his own account, to his very great profit. 'The extravagant and pleasure-loving' third Earl of Pembroke in eight years paid interest exceeding £1,100 on a loan of £1,600.

Dr Smith does not hesitate to disagree with Professors Hurstfield and Elton when the evidence tells him to. He suggests that Buckhurst (Lord Treasurer from 1599 to 1608, between the two Cecils) may have been no less a reformer and innovator than the younger Cecil. Between 1603 and 1621, Dr Smith points out, parliamentary taxation brought in less than £51,000 a year, whereas the crown's ordinary revenue in these years averaged £450,000 per annum. If Buckhurst's attempt to increase income from crown lands had been successful, the situation of the monarchy might yet have been saved.

Cecil as Lord Treasurer failed to follow up this promising line of approach. He played for higher stakes, attempting a deal with Parliament which would have guaranteed an extra revenue of £200,000 a year in return for the crown giving up wardship, purveyance and other unpopular components of the ordinary revenue. When this Great Contract collapsed in 1610 Cecil was sick and discredited. The attempt to increase revenue from crown lands was abandoned; a suicidal policy of land sales followed.

Dr Smith makes Hickes come alive as a person, and an agreeably complex person he is. Rarely can a money-lender have been on such jovial and affable terms with his clients, even though Hickes could on occasion turn the screw on a poor widow whose 'estate is such as she is enforced to borrow the money that must be paid you'. Hickes lived in genuinely friendly intimacy with Robert Cecil, until in the last four years of his life the Earl of Salisbury withdrew into a 'comparative coolness'. But in the 1590s Cecil often told 'lusty Mr Michael' that 'we are merry, and would be the better if you were here'.

In this letter Cecil said that his friends longed for Hickes's 'Puritan's company', and Hickes helps us to understand this perplexing word. Combination of the roles of money-lender and Puritan fits one stereotype; but Hickes was also a merry fellow, a passionate lover of music and a patron of the masque. Not quite the killjoy Puritan of legend, but rather like that real-life Puritan John Milton.

There can be no doubt about the genuineness and stability of Hickes's radical protestant beliefs, which he seems to have acquired at Cambridge in the early years of Elizabeth's reign. Two of his radical Trinity friends worked with him in Burghley's secretariat – evidence of the latter's own sympathy for 'the godly party': one of them sponsored a Puritan bill in the Parliament of 1572. Even more remarkable is Hickes's continuing devotion to another Cambridge friend, John Stubbe, who in 1579 was sentenced to have his right hand cut off for writing a pamphlet denouncing the Queen's proposed marriage to a French prince. Hickes went on corresponding admiringly with Stubbe during the two years in which he was held in prison, and after his release. The rebellious Puritan Thomas Cartwright, in danger of arrest in 1573 for pamphleteering against the Archbishop of Canterbury, was sheltered for some time at Hickes's family house, and Hickes supplied him with money. After his return from exile in 1590 Cartwright still received help from Hickes and referred to their 'profession of the same faith'. In 1592 he asked Hickes to mediate with Burghley to secure his release from prison, reminding him of 'the love you bore my brother Stubbe'. Cartwright was released, and three years later Hickes asked him for a form of prayer for his own use.

This readiness to run considerable risks to help those of whose religious policies Hickes approved must be borne in mind when we are tempted to dismiss the Puritan money-lender as a hypocrite. Hickes's Puritanism also, as Dr Smith suggests, explains the apparent cynicism with which Hickes demanded the market price for helping men to bishoprics and deaneries. Since he probably had no respect for the ecclesiastical hierarchy, such suits were 'no different in kind from those in which the clients were laymen'.

For all its unpretentiousness and its agreeable brevity, this is an illuminating and instructive book. It helps us to see the Elizabethan pageant from behind the scenes; it helps us to understand the Puritan loyalties of a merry and cultured gentleman who was also a money-lender. At one moment it brings us very close to life. The high point of Hickes's career came when in August 1597 the Queen honoured him by staying at his home. He met her with his eloquent speech of welcome ready. But

> the resplendence of her Majesty's royal presence and princely aspect did on a sudden so daunt all my senses and so dazzle mine eyes as, for the time, I had use neither of speech nor memory.

Such was Elizabeth's effect on a hard-headed and Puritanical government servant. Dr Smith plausibly suggests that Hickes's refusal to accept knighthood in 1603 relates to this incident. James I knighted him in 1604, during what one hopes was a more successful visit to Hickes's house.

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Neal Ascherson

Pre-War Quality

Selected Poems by TADEUSZ ROZEWICZ translated by Adam Czerniawski *Penguin* 90p

The visitor comes into the hall: he receives a freezing but totally courteous reception. He is taken at a brisk pace through astonishing salons, down corridors filled with skulls, past doors opening into rooms containing nothing whatever and parlours furnished with geometry upholstered in algebra. Questions are not answered. Tips are refused. A cold green eye sees the visitor out to the waiting coach.

A good deal of Polish verse gives the reader this feeling. Polish theatre, much more 'fashionable' in its succession of enthusiasms and experiments, in its changing tones of voice, does not. But poetry is more reticent; even its garishness is non-commercial. A Warsaw friend said: 'I go to church because it's the only place I can get pre-war quality.' The poetry of Rózewicz made me remember that remark.

He is a poet with hauteur. He knows he is good ('a shoddy poet who has died/Is a shoddy dead poet'). In Poland, he occupies a very special position, venerated although he is only in his fifties and followed by a comet-trail of apprentices. Political hurricanes, like those which buffeted Slonimski (who sailed into them) or drove Zbigniew Herbert abroad, haven't affected him much. He is almost equally well known as a writer of plays, impossible farces like *The Interrupted Act* which is really a St Valentine's Day Massacre of Polish theatrical fads, or the famous *Card Index*. Three of these plays have also been translated by Adam Czerniawski (*The Card Index and Other Plays* Calder & Boyars, 1969), who is more responsible than anyone else for bringing Rózewicz to English-speaking readers, and who translated the poems in this selection.

Many of the poems are about poetry. Rózewicz is very deliberately not an aesthete, not an ideologue and not a 'presenter' or showman. He prefers to regard poetry as a force, the poet responding to it as zealot touched with grace – except that no God but the world itself is distributing this grace. He says sympathetically about Rimbaud: 'After the death of poetry/he planned to start/a real solid family . . .' Not a hope. Nor is there a hope of stuffing poetry into spray-cans with different flavours. In 'Birth of a New Poem' he writes about two 'comfortable and experimental' pieces of verse, 'the interiors lit up', rushing through the night to collide and produce in the chaos the real thing.

Some of his verse is very direct. The short poem 'Massacre of the Boys', which is about Auschwitz and known all over the world, or the much longer 'Old Peasant Woman Walks Along the Beach' (1952) are in no way sly. The latter, in fact, is surprisingly close to the sort of helpful, socially-conscious verse which the regime appreciated at that time. War and occupation are present almost everywhere : 'Objects excavated in my country have small black/heads sealed with plaster and horrible grins . . .' Images like that, in most countries seen only by a few people who have since devoted much energy to trying to forget them, were an almost universal experience for Rózewicz's generation in Poland: they and the corresponding interest in the fact of being alive govern many of his poems.

He writes, like Tadeusz Borowski, about the jaunty nihilism of the concentrationnaire who finds he has survived ('the following are empty synonyms: /man and beast/love and hate . . .'), and also clearing away the debris of dead words after a war or an autocracy. Here he is like that group of post-war German poets who took little, hard words and rinsed them carefully one by one until they were usable again: Rózewicz's 'In the Midst of Life', though written in 1955 as the Stalinist period was waning, catches their mood. Sometimes he becomes sentimental, and sometimes the dryness and spareness look like snobbery rather than economy. But at his best, in the untitled poem which begins 'He tears easily . . .' or in 'Shallowly Quicker' (about a world which has sold out of souls), Rózewicz belongs in every anthology of post-war verse.

Peter Redgrove

Evolution

Shiva-Shakti sweet frog-legs where leaping is in the springs
Up high, higher, high as you can get, the person-springs
Leaping on land, in bed, or standing
In holy mirrors for their intercourse, the statues;

At first that springwater made fishskin for swimming
Like flow in the flow, then for dancing
Upright in the springs as frogs, now

Enclosed the living springs themselves
Dancing in the woman, in woman-skin,
And dancing in the spring her elf
Fathered by leaping, leaping of itself;

Crown her with green
Bring her caves and water to the man of beards.

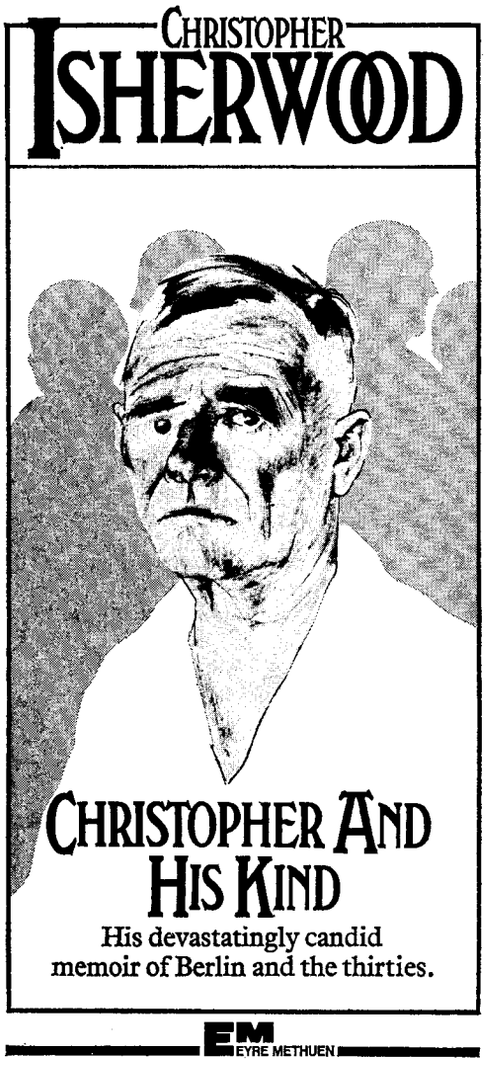
Eric Rhode

Wolf Cubs

The Deadly Innocents by MURIEL GARDINER *Hogarth Press* £5.50

Muriel Gardiner is best known to English readers as the editor and co-author of *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud*. This biographical compilation buttressed reprints of Freud's most extended case-history and Ruth Mack Brunswick's subsequent treatment of the same patient with reports on the Wolf-Man's life in later years. Among the many fascinating questions it raised, two were outstanding: how are we to formulate and transmit understanding of the human personality; and what are the techniques most needed to investigate this area of knowledge?

The Deadly Innocents raises the same questions, but in a different guise. It portrays briefly, almost in the manner of a short story, the lives of ten young murderers or would-be murderers. And it makes much of the point that bad homes, bad reformatories – and indeed bad environments generally – may help to precipitate these acts of violence. It is a point worth hearing again; although the author does strain credulity when she claims that 'prison



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has ruined Rose's life' – and this of a girl who had smashed in her younger brother's skull in order to torture her father, who doted on the boy.

The primary aim, however, is not to comment on social conditions. As a psychiatric consultant in American schools and prisons, Miss Gardiner wants to scorch us with the experience of people she has come to know well, though not necessarily worked with:

> I have spent many hours trying to identify with each of these young persons, trying to think his thoughts, feel his feelings, live his life. I shall not rest until I have made these stories known.

The portraits endorse this sincerity. At the same time, a *Reader's Digest* manner of writing – laced with 'conversations' that no one surely ever spoke – goes against Miss Gardiner's desire to clarify motives. Rightly avoiding the impersonality of some case-histories, and the kind of jargon that conceals, she moves too far in the other direction. In effect, she oversimplifies the behaviour of her young persons. George, we are told, had always been a 'good' boy. In adolescence he met a couple of burglars, who invited him to join up with them. He joins up with them. But why? Miss Gardiner can do no better than to say, 'George was thrilled. Here was the adventure he had been looking for – and with two such friends. Vic was already his idol; he could do no wrong.'

You need only to reread the story of Abel and Cain, or Freud's Wolf-Man history, or even any good detective yarn, to recognise the importance of specific detail. We all know that Sherlock Holmes's flair depended on his capacity for understanding minutiae. What may be less well known (though Hitchcock seems to have intuited it) is that certain murderers experience a swelling up of what, to the rest of us, may appear marginal phenomena. In one of his papers A. Hyatt Williams has written of an adolescent girl harrassed by a stepfather who kept complaining about her table manners. As she grew increasingly persecuted, she began to see him as a bear-like animal:

> She felt that his knife and fork were enormous and that he was going to fix her in position with his fork while he cut her to pieces with his knife. When she could bear it no longer, she seized the carving knife and stabbed him with it.

One of the problems in writing about murderers is that violence can burst out in attacks that have no seeming connection with the rest of the personality: a violence, moreover, that has only a casual relationship to social deprivation or cruel upbringing. Miss Gardiner reflects this perplexity, I think: yet in her enthusiasm to portray each of her killers as a guileless Everyman, she tends to lose track of its importance. What she (and we) need is an approach to character, whether in fiction or biography, that sees such acts as part of the central, if concealed, structure of the personality.

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Gillian Tindall

The Tsar and I

When Miss Emmie was in Russia: English Governesses Before, During and After the October Revolution by HARVEY PITCHER *Murray* £5.95

Time is running out because time is always running out. This may sound like a religious exhortation, but the message is not for the scatterbrained sinner but for the tardy social historian; not 'Prepare to meet thy Maker' but 'Prepare to meet old persons and record their experiences before *they* shuffle off to their Maker.' Even as we sit here, the old soldiers of the first world war are fading away at an alarming rate; most of those who fled from Russia at the Revolution, and spent the rest of their lives confidently expecting to return, have finally retreated to that Greater Russia in the skies. When the last White Russian dies, will Imperial Russia then become dead too, in a way it could not while still held in the preservative of memory that admits no change?

How fortunate that the English governesses who served pre-Revolutionary families have proved such a long-lived lot, and that Harvey Pitcher has caught up with a number of them in time. Another decade, and his gallery of 'alert octogenarians or nonagenarians' will have gone, taking their dress-baskets of memories away with them. As it is, these memories, with his assistance, have emerged fresh and clear of later influences in that they are not, on the whole, the recollections of people with any political axe to grind. The sort of intrepid young Englishwoman who took up a post in such an alien land was not usually someone with fixed ideas about how society ought to be run. Typically, a firm belief in the virtues of English soap and English schoolroom timetables was as far as she went; middle- or lower-middle-class in origin, she found herself, once in Russia, lifted into a world of wealth and grandeur such as she would never have entered in her own country, and yet at the same time often received into the bosom of the family: what should she know of social inequalities or growing unrest outside? As Emma Dashwood, the 'Miss Emmie' of the title, said in response to some questioning by Mr Pitcher about a big country house: 'I never thought of that place as a collection of different rooms. To me it was a *home* and I was happy there', while another governess of the same period (just pre-1914) declared of a similar estate,

> you would feel yourself no stranger, for your welcome would be so sure that in less than no time you would be wondering if by any chance you had been there before.

Later in the war Emma Dashwood was in the employ of another family, in Petrograd, and with them sat out the days of the October Revolution while the gunfire rattled outside. But in 1918 she returned to her original family, who by then were renting a small flat in a Crimean coastal resort – the first staging post of many White Russian families on their way into exile. Curiously, yet somehow fittingly, in a world where so much had been turned upside down so suddenly, it never did become clear in what circumstances the family had had to leave their estate – 'Very little was ever said on the subject, and it was almost as if Pervitino and the life there together had never existed'. By that time, too, the father was dead, but just when or how was never explained to Miss Emmie. Perhaps this indomitable if eccentric refusal to discuss sad subjects was typical of such families – but perhaps, too, it corresponded to her own sunny, incurious temperament. She seems to have been remarkably lucky, all through the Revolution, in narrowly avoiding unpleasant events. She was finally taken off from Sevastopol at the beginning of April 1919 by a British ship, but apparently had no idea at all, till Mr Pitcher told her almost 60 years later, that the Bolshevik Army had captured the Crimea within days.

Miss Emmie's story is interleaved with those of other governesses and members of the English trading community in Russia, some of them known to her. Several of them had harder, or more alarming experiences than she did – near-starvation, house-searches by Red Guards, nightmare train journeys – but their joint experiences blend with hers to form a picture of one composite, archetypal English 'Miss'. It is a clever way of constructing what might otherwise have been a rather bitty account, though it does have the disadvantage (for purists) that the separate personalities never do become quite distinct. Now was it Gertie Kirby or Edith Kerby who . . . ? And was Scottie the nickname of . . . ? Or was it Miss Emmie . . . ? No matter. They are *all* Miss Emmie, even the one whose eventual death was reported to the British authorities in 1941, after she had been sharing a single room in Georgia with 'her' family for nearly 20 years. Greater love hath no British governess.

Among this week's contributors:

NEAL ASCHERSON worked for some years in Central Europe as correspondent for the *Observer* and has specialised in Polish affairs since 1957. He is at present writing on Scottish politics for the *Scotsman* in Edinburgh.

STANLEY SADIE is the editor of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and has published books on Handel and Mozart.

Among A. J. P. TAYLOR's more recent publications are *The Second World War* (1975) and *Essays in English History* (1975).

GILLIAN TINDALL's *The Fields Beneath: A History of Kentish Town* will be published by Temple Smith later this year.

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Jeremy Treglown

Kithflicks

Kith by P. H. NEWBY *Faber* £3.95
Sombrero Fallout by RICHARD BRAUTIGAN *Cape* £3.50
The Painter of Signs by R. K. NARAYAN *Heinemann* £3.50
Nobody's Fault by MERVYN JONES *Quartet* £4.25

A middle-aged man sits down to write about his World War II experiences in Egypt. After the terrifying and to him humiliating ordeal of being a non-combatant stretcher-bearer at Dunkirk, he had wanted to do some fighting. But there again he hadn't, because the morality of the war seemed at the time uncertain. The allied line on the Nazis might all have been a propagandist fiction – 'You'd have to be bloody evil to believe the stories you hear about Hitler' – and it was particularly hard for the 19-year-old to imagine that the Führer could be worse than himself, obsessed as he was with sex and specifically with Nadia, the Egyptian wife of his Uncle Raymond, also stationed in Suez. Anyway, he recalls, issues like these were often less pressing at the time than others, now apparently trivial:

> Absurd as it may seem, my main thought was what a figure I must have cut in my army issue khaki shorts. These were the ones with flaps which could be unbuttoned and let down to be secured below the knees . . . As soon as I had finished ringing the doorbell, hammering with my fist on the ironwork and shouting outside Aunt Nadia's flat – this lasted for some minutes – I went and found a tailor and offered him a pound if he would de-flap my shorts immediately. These are the very shorts I am wearing at this moment.

Frequent allusions like this to the narrator's present state help to anchor P. H. Newby's potentially hackneyed concerns with memory and the art of fiction in a vivid comic reality which deflates but never devalues the Proustian adolescent romance at the centre. And although the literary debate engaged in by the narrator, his furtive uncle and Nadia's homicidal father threatens to turn *Kith* into something like a Joseph Heller adaptation of Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy*, particularly when Nadia herself pitches in with Lawrence and Henry James, its main questions – how accurately we can recover and transcribe our past, and whether the anticipation of future memories imposes obligations on the way we live in the present – give a strong resonance to narrative facts like Dunkirk, or Uncle Raymond's eventual death in a desert minefield. Newby's characteristic blend of humour and pathos in *Kith* is hard to convey but very easy indeed to enjoy, and his account of the confused intensities of adolescence is true both to the condition and how it is recalled later.

Knee-buckling oriental perfumes and the Eastern woman's natural grace and rhythm in general are big topics this week, though I found the breezy Aunt Nadia's attractions more convincing than those of Yukiko, the subject of Richard Brautigan's canton of contemned love. *Sombrero Fallout* offsets a love story almost medieval in its sentimental idolatry with a fantasy about a UFO – the sombrero of the title – that manages to produce a small civil war in ten easy stages. Brautigan's comic touch is predictably unerring and the hilarious narrative development is studded with wry surreal gags ('He never lacked things to worry about . . . If he taught all his worries to sing, they would have made the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sound like a potato.') The Yukiko bits, though, kept reminding me of that sticky moment in every variety show when the lights go pink and the compère flattens his hair, shoots his cuffs, slips the mike out of its stand and huskily lets rip on 'You Made Me Love You'.

R. K. Narayan's principal female also attracts by her foreignness, though geographically this scenario works in the opposite direction. She is an Indian called Daisy and her up-to-date views – she's a missionary for population control – are the source of both the success and the failure of her relationship with the widely-read, rational-minded but reactionary sign-painter she takes on a working tour of local villages. The story is simple, chronologically straightforward and unobtrusively emblematic: in the very nature of the work a professional ad-man won't manage the unqualified commitment to a particular statement that Daisy's life necessitates any more than such a woman can commit herself to a traditional marriage. In a style which very subtly combines the strange and the familiar, Narayan communicates a deep knowledge of his main character and his job, while unpretentiously sketching in the religious and environmental pressures in India that affect the big human issue involved.

To breed or not to breed is a question that crops up closer to home in Mervyn Jones's latest novel, about Tamsin's affairs and marriages with her two former co-editors on the university literary mag., Brian, now a failed poet, and Keith, a rich pop-music promoter. Keith wants children but turns out to be infertile. Brian, on the other hand, neither wants nor indeed can afford the infant with whom he temporarily impregnates the careless Tamsin.

It's a readable, well-observed fiction which somehow misses out because of its own self-assurance, its easy acceptance of a style of realism which makes reality itself seem like a set of literary conventions. When we're told, for example, that Tamsin's family have lunch but Keith's call the same meal dinner, the code is so instantly decoded as to forfeit any interest in the broader distinction it tries to suggest. There's a clear-eyed chapter or two about Brian and Tamsin's attempt to live in a snowbound croft in Scotland, but on the whole it's a performance difficult to feel strongly about.

Robin Fulton

Something We Didn't Know Was There

Goldfish in the reflection of bricks.
The steep buildings round us, barely a glimpse
of English perspectives beyond,
moderate hills, moderate groups of trees,
the steep buildings murmur like transformers,
all the words we don't hear, the eyes
we don't see, the work we are not doing.

I seem to start dreaming. Landscapes
small and distant, close-by and large,
grow dull. We could be trapped in a faded
photograph a hundred years old,
figures beyond remembrance or pity,
less recognisable than things,
ageless grass seeding in clear focus.

Dreams chill. And sounds. In the quiet
bushes sparrows are chirping louder and louder.
The pond wrinkles and grows young again
and wrinkles. We shiver at last and look up –
eclipse! A black hole where the sun should be.
We believe what we see, we believe
extremes when we see them and hurriedly gather

books, coats, ask 'Are you cold?'

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Ian Hamilton

Make It Mine

If Angela Pope the other week had wished to avoid the accusation that her 'fly on the wall' treatment of a comprehensive school was slanted, she could have done worse than slot in a few actors, sketch out a mini-plot and call her enterprise a 'documentary drama'. Real kids could still have been observed at their delinquencies, and there could have been just as many bona fide shots of classroom chaos; some of the time, though, we wouldn't have known which shots were staged and which were sliced from life, which lines were scripted and which had fallen spontaneously into the sound-man's line of fire. The resulting life and art *mélange* would probably have been praised as less artificial than *Play for Today* and more imaginatively bold than your average *Panorama*. Polemical ingredients would have been acceptable as 'literature'; roughness of construction would have been the decent price to pay for the authentic.

Barry Hines, the author of the latest Loach-Garnett film, *The Price of Coal* (two linked films, really, on BBC-1 this week and last), has said that he likes plays 'in which people behave like themselves' – thus, much of his 'dialogue' hangs around in that semi-improvised realm where you don't so much listen to what's said as sit back and wonder at its similarity to normal speech. Or, depending on where you come from, at its regional impenetrability. Because it's natural in groups for anything up to three people to be talking at the same time, Hines will let three people talk at the same time: it's the convincing hubbub that's important and if you only catch the odd word here [illegible]ere – well, that's the way things [illegible]ilarly, traffic noises are in real life [illegible] drowning speech – Hines would think it artificial to tone down the noises off. It's the texture not the detail that excites him.

Well, that may be so – but it's just as well his plays aren't meant for radio and that Kenneth Loach is such a skilled and sensitive director. Much of the films' considerable impact was visual; hauntingly so, in the second film, which painstakingly took us through the various stages of a pit disaster. While the rescue party burrowed for survivors, the families sat at home watching a romantic war film on the box; a tiny clue that reminded us where we'd seen these images before – blood-stained greens and khakis, live bodies clambering over dead, collapsed trenches and so on. The parallels weren't crudely insisted on, but it was hard at these moments not to go along with the films' overall view of the miner as a heroic, victimised combatant.

At other times, it was less hard – mainly because the author seemed to be nudging us a bit too much. The miners were all portrayed as immensely likeable; humorous, bawdy, stoical, fond of their wives and kids, impatient with the false, instinctively in tune with all that's genuine. In the first film, the mine was shown preparing itself for a Royal Visit, and the clear opposition – though whimsically staged – was between fussy officials and sceptical workers. The management were rushing around painting and mending things that should have been fixed years ago; with varying degrees of ironic amusement the men played along. One or two made anti-royal speeches, but their hearts weren't in it and they were easily brought into line by more good-humoured comrades. They had their principles but they weren't going to mess things up for other people; there were more important things to make a fuss about, it was implied. Ridicule was levelled at the organisers, but in a fond, farcically tuned, manner. The head man, excellently played by the comedian Jackie Shinn, spent the entire show in a comic flap – his high moment of despair comes when a few minutes before the Royal Visitor is due to arrive, he finds 'Arthur Scargill Rules – O.K.?' painted all over the pit's entrance: 'If I ever find the thick headed twat who did that I'll string him up by his knackers.'

In the second film, the same head man was seen worrying about 'productivity' and bawling out an underling for not having fixed a minor engineering fault in Number 15; the underling in turn bawls out his men, and the fault is thus too hastily attended to. Hence the disaster. Lyrical pictures of family-man miners setting off for work (kiss for the wife, two Test Match tickets for the little son) portend the worst, and when it happens we are meant to ponder on the remoteness of officials from the realities of life below. The most coherent speeches tended to be along these lines, and at times their shapeliness obtruded in a rather irritating way. Other unusually structured bits of dialogue occurred whenever there was an opportunity to attack the Press. Media men were portrayed throughout as 'vultures' and were shown interrupting every poignant moment of the drama with paparazzi-style insensitivities. Every so often they would be rounded on and tongue-lashed in sentences that had main verbs:

> You make me poorly, you lot. You come up here to write sob stories but just wait until we want another pay rise. Then you'll say we're holding the country to ransom.

This speech was delivered by an otherwise tongue-tied miner's wife who is waiting to hear if her husband is among the dead; it rang horribly false – and not a little vulture-like in the way it contrived to interrupt the poor woman's natural grief.

In a fairly thin week, *Jesus of Nazareth* (ATV) looked as if it really would be a godsend – all that money, all those stars lurking behind all those beards, and a promised return to deMille standards of expansiveness. There were plenty of the routine laughs – Joseph being persuaded into marriage with Mary with the words 'You won't regret it', and Mary herself owning up to her odd pregnancy as follows: 'He who is mighty has done unto me a mighty thing.' Joseph looked properly sick on hearing the glad tidings; I mean, he'd heard some excuses in his time, but *this* . . . It was not long, though, before his face had assumed something approaching his wife's pre-Natal radiance, and the pair of them were throughout allowed better-laundered gear than any of their neighbours. There was also some vulgar spot-the-star fun to be had; as usual, the bigger the name, the less prepared he was to advance beyond self-parody. Peter Ustinov, for instance, could have been appearing on the Parkinson show for all the concessions he made to period demands: *'It is written,* indeed. Literacy has had a disastrous effect on this country.' But, as epics go, it was all beautiful to look at, and Robert Powell – though a bit toothy and effete – would hang well on anyone's cathedral wall.

Not that I lasted the full three hours, may God forgive me. Vying with our Maker on Sunday night, was the transcendental *Whose Doctor Who* (BBC-2) – not the show itself, but an analysis of its impact and significance, with plentiful clips way back to William Hartnell days. Solemn 'educationalists' concluded that the point of scaring the wits out of the young was to warn them that science isn't everything and that they ought to be alert to the dangerousness of types who go around screaming 'I'll be ruler of the universe' or 'Such power will set me up above the Gods'. The interviewed kiddies were a trifle more hard-headed: 'I'm the sort of person who *likes* being scared' pretty well summed up *their* estimate of the Doc's didactic role.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Loot

In the Red *Whitehall*
The Magic Drum *Lyttleton*
Fire Angel *Her Majesty's*

I can't say that William Douglas Home has ever occupied a very prominent place in my personal pantheon, but I had always thought him an amiable old buffer, not the sort to let his gamekeeper actually hang you from the manor belfry if you were caught poaching the pheasants. Now I am not so sure. Consider the plot of his *In the Red*, ponder the assumptions behind it. The hero is a dramatist or, as he prefers to put it, an 'artist', entitled *de jure*

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to the perks of his trade, which include a £65,000 house, three cars, a swimming pool, a tennis court, a sauna and an Italian couple called Primo and Portia. But lately he's been spending less time in his study than on the telephone to his bookie, and so his overdraft has reached some £11,000 which, very unreasonably, his bankers think too high. In comes the local branch's newly-appointed manager with the gentle suggestion he should reduce it, a notion that prompts our embryo Shakespeare, Coward or Douglas Home to call him 'not a gentleman', 'the poor man's IMF' and 'a nosy little man in a dark suit'. 'It's just the breed,' he explains humorously, 'It's like some people are allergic to cats.'

The nosy little man looks a bit uncomfortable at this last sally, as well he might, since he has by now been asked to dinner in the house of this budding Sheridan, Pinero or Douglas Home. But he is not, of course, as welcome a guest as he has been led to believe. In fact, the idea is to bamboozle and blackmail him into showing the proper deference to an artist's bouncing cheque-book. He is to be pumped full of liquor, forced to rehearse a suggestive dramatic scene with his host's wife, persuaded to take off his trousers, and then photographed in a compromising clinch by Webster, Congreve or Douglas Home, who is lurking with a camera in the wings. 'It's all in a good cause,' grins this gentleman when one of the family expresses a mild qualm, 'Needs must when the devil drives.' Something has to be done about little men who presume to covet the loot that has been swiped from them by their betters, and David Clifton, to give our hero the name by which Keith Prowse knows him, has undertaken the task on behalf of all those in danger of being wantonly deprived of their saunas and swimming pools.

Since I can't imagine that anyone will actually want to see this curious concoction, I may as well reveal that Clifton's gilded lass eventually decides to marry the Nat-West yob, explaining to everyone's satisfaction that 'I love him, he reminds me of my teddy bear.' This is, you see, a comedy, tooled out with a regulation ending, not to be taken seriously. But as detectives, barbers and critics all know, fluff can be strangely revealing, and I think we're entitled to pry an inch or two behind the unyielding smiles of Gerald Harper, who saunters through the main part like an ageless tuck-shop swell, and the squat and podgy embarrassment of Norman Rossington, who plays his victim. Is *In the Red*, then, another muted blow, akin to that recently struck by C. P. Snow's *Case in Question*, on behalf of classes who feel their privileges melting beneath them, like thin ice in the sun? If so, it would surely be better to establish the Cliftons as the custodians of something more worthwhile than tennis courts and Italian serfs. No, what gives the piece its curious fascination is the glimpse it offers of Mr Douglas Home's own fantasies, which, I fear, turn out to be greedy, smug, callous and abjectly tasteless: an incitement to would-be redistributors of the national cake from a Marie Antoinette in plus-fours. I shall find it hard to think of the old buffer in quite the same way again.

You've barely a couple more chances to take your bairns to *The Magic Drum*, a splendidly-staged whimsy on a return-ticket from Leicester; but the management of *Fire Angel* seems, even less logically, to think time is on its side. At any rate, the thrusting ads proliferate, including one thanking us reviewers for our 'unanimous response to London's new Spectacular Musical'. Far be it from me to be the odd man out, especially when Giovanni Fiorentino and others have been insulted by the company's bland declaration that its updated, New-Yorkified version of *The Merchant* comes from an 'original idea by William Shakespeare'. It didn't, it wasn't. Some, admittedly, ride the half-comprehensible result as if it were a Derby winner instead of a stale, limping nag which only some miracle of restoration can now rescue from the knackers; but others look resigned to their probable fate. Its Portia, or 'Fire Angel', turns out to be the kind of chaste English primrose only a bounder would pick, and its Bassanio is less bounder than sleeper, a very numb presence indeed. Shylock, or 'Barach' as he's rechristened, has a rivetingly odd chorus with what appear to be a dozen rabbis, bopping about with mikes; but I can't help thinking it a mistake to saddle him with a name that sounds like an order to dispirited audiences. If they keep on intoning 'Barach' as freely as they do, people will soon start to obey.

Films

John Coleman

Special K

Mr Klein *EMI International, Bloomsbury, from 11 April and BBC-2, 10 April*
The Eagle Has Landed *Empire*
Stand Up Virgin Soldiers *Warner West End 4; ABC 2, Shaftesbury Avenue*
Silver Streak *Odeon, Leicester Square*
Airport '77 *Plazas 1 and 2; ABCs Fulham and Edgware Roads*

You feel Joseph Losey's *Mr Klein* – Cannes and London festivals last year and winner of three French 'Césars' – has been gauged not just to the foot but to the inch; and, at 122 minutes, that makes a lot of inches. There is time and to spare for the viewer to savour its craft, its elegance, its nifty cutting, its Loseyan use of mirrors: finally, one takes away the memory of its absolute, pluperfect self-satisfaction, of an exquisitely drawing-boarded fraud. Alain Delon is Mr Robert Klein, a neat, amoral fellow with everything going for him in the war-wounded France of 1942, buying good paintings cheap from Jews on the run; keeping a sexy mistress (Juliet Berto) bed-locked on satin sheets; only evil in the nicest possible way. Then this complacent smoothie has his surface ruffled: a Jewish newsletter, addressed to him, arrives in the post. There is another R. Klein and the subsequent curlicues of the plot, devised by Franco Solinas, set Delon on his trail, intent on proving his own gentile genealogy and yet enmeshing himself deeper and deeper in suspicion, ultimately attaining something resembling guilt. Occupied Paris and its environs are very well brought to life. Klein/Delon stumbles on a sordid apartment in rue des Abbesses, complete with scared concierge (Suzanne Flon) and a photographic clue; a mysterious note leads him to a grand country house in Ivry-la-Bataille and a nocturnal encounter with Jeanne Moreau; there is a trip to a night-club where some dreadful anti-Semitic play is being staged for applauding diners, and a camera-whirl around La Coupole; not forgetting the workers, there is also an eerie visit to a factory in search of the other Klein's girlfriend. *She*, in fact, later turns up on a train and Delon concludes on a Germany-bound cattle-truck.

An irony of some order is intended here, since an early, haggling dialogue as he beats a Jew down over the price for a family heirloom is heard again, played over the passing, ghost faces in that ultimate train. The basic worry is that Delon has long before gone missing in the decor, the set-pieces so thoughtfully mounted. A steely hint of sexual sadism apart, and that right at the start, his Klein is damn near characterless, a natty, pretty face. It is possible, of course, that this was Losey's intention, to give us a Kafkan K. adrift in a welter of allusions and illusions (there is some thoroughly naughty nonsense about a double mention of *Moby Dick*); to leave us to decode the cipher Klein. God knows it is fashionable in some film quarters to make puzzle-pictures, life being an enigma, etc. But such an argument hardly holds more water than a colander when one is face to face with a movie as consistently stylised as this, both verbally (the heavy poetry of a Moreau-Delon exchange, 'vultures' and 'snakes', for instance) and visually (Gerry Fisher's photography so beautifully 'composed' as to call attention to the care that went into it). After all, there was a real war, there were 6 million Jews killed, and super-chic, a kind of stoned mystification – however comforting to the prize-giving French – seem inapposite approaches to these facts: like running up a Dior shroud for a corpse.

At least there are one or two sequences in the Losey, notably an ugly overture in which a Jewish woman is seen stripped, being weighed, measured and probed for tell-tale signs of Semitic origin, that strike hard. *The Eagle Has Landed*, garbled from a bestseller, would have us believe that Michael Caine, as a maverick German hero during the war, was despatched to England in 1943 with his devoted gang of paratroops to kidnap Churchill. A 'feasibility study' is requested by mad Adolf at the outset: as much might have been exacted before this idiocy lumbered off the ground. Norfolk in November (dated by a reference to the Teheran summit) is merry with blossom; Donald Sutherland, as an IRA chappie, is merry with Jenny Agutter as an instant love-bird; I hope John Sturges, who is credited with directing, is merry with his bank-balance. All the Chermans, except Himmler (a role Donald Pleasence grasps with one hand), are frightfully de-

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cent and there is a very thick American base commander. Where *our* military had got to is anyone's guess. How common can a film market get? The response is, alas, to hand with *Stand Up Virgin Soldiers*, an all-too-British romp manhandled around a crew of National Service conscripts, Singapore, 1950. The formula reads a wank, a wink and a weep. A local whore, Juicy Lucy, says 'Fluck off' several times, the gag clearly too good to be wasted; Warren Mitchell does a Welsh striptease; a few recruits die during an unnecessary exercise. The hideous fear arises that this, too, may make money.

On to pleasanter things and Arthur Hiller's *Silver Streak*, genially written by Colin Higgins. This is a train-film and I like train-films: you could say they have a good track-record. A milder Gene Wilder than usual plays a West Coast publisher, hoping for a restful trip from Los Angeles to Chicago: 'I just want to be bored,' he explains. Too late: he is rapidly up to his flickering eyes in sex and disaster, meeting a highly attractive secretary (Jill Clayburgh – 'I give great phone'), seeing her art historian boss drop dead past their shared compartment window, finding himself disembarked three times from the speeding vehicle only to return by stratagems too outrageous to retail. There is a very fine supporting performance by black Richard Pryor, a thief, and one of the zaniest scenes has Wilder boot-polished-up and doing the most hair-raising turn in his company as a way-out, rhythmic coloured companion: Mr Pryor's pained incredulity is something to see in its own right. The contorted tale has loosely to do with a gang of thugs led by Patrick McGoohan as the crooked chairman of Chicago's Art Institute. Helicopters, a biplane, a grand terminal crash provide some mechanical interest.

Rather too much for my taste, in fact. I would swap the most adroitly choreographed car-chase for a laughable line professionally delivered or even a mute scene well set up. Here we get both. Clifton James figures briefly as a hick sheriff, patiently trying to come to terms with Wilder on the run. He listens to some high-falutin' gabble about forgeries and such and then decides to cool matters. Pen in hand, 'Who shot Rembrandt?' he asks, down to brass tacks. Elsewhere, two fat men sit disconsolately in the restaurant car, contemplating diets. Before that, a plain girl has accosted Wilder. 'Do you like this perfume?' she queries. 'I mix it myself.'

Who mixes thin and costly pabulum like *Airport '77* is easily answered: writers Michael Scheff and David Spector, may they live for ever. A new jumbo jet ferrying a cargo of expensive guests, wine and – as it happens – paintings again to the palatial mansion of multimillionaire James Stewart (who is allowed about two drawls) is clumsily hijacked, ending up in the drink. 'Some choice we got. Either we all drown or we all suffocate,' says one of the immersed. All kinds of technical wizardry are then set in motion, from complicated air-sea-rescue manoeuvres to the sight of Jack Lemmon abandoning his natural gifts as an actor in favour of those of a robot. Some of us suffocate.

Music

Andrew Clements

Walton at 75

London Symphony Orchestra *Festival Hall*
BBC Symphony Orchestra *Festival Hall/ Radio 3*

Celebrations of musical birthdays sometimes run the risk of doing a disservice to the composer they are intended to honour. Since they usually take the form of performances of a large proportion of his output, an opportunity for reassessment is at least implied; new congruences may be established, new influences traced. William Walton's 75th has passed relatively quickly. Covent Garden began things with its new production of *Troilus and Cressida* last November, but otherwise the season of concerts and revision documentaries has been concentrated in the week of his birthday (on 29 March). (Compare this with last year's never-ending bean feasts for Henze at 50!) How then should we regard Walton, now the Grand Old Man of British music? It's easy enough to dismiss him as a child of his time, born of the 1920s, fostered in the Thirties and deserted after the second world war as a relic of a lost generation, vainly trying to recapture inspiration. Certainly the inter-war years were Walton's greatest, and the achievements of those years are considerable.

What is most obvious about the start of Walton's career is his luck. The *succès de scandale* of *Façade* in 1923 was as much due to the Sitwells' conception as to his music. Whether the brittleness of *Façade*'s parodies came naturally to the young Walton or whether it was merely encompassed by his prodigious technical facility, the music that followed gradually became more personal, revealing a fondness for lyricism that previously he would have mocked. It produced the haunting beauty of the Viola Concerto but was ruthlessly suppressed for the brash, extrovert *Belshazzar's Feast*, again prompted by a Sitwell, this time Osbert. But nothing in Walton's music before the First Symphony even hinted at its power and achievement, rivalled only by Elgar's Second among British symphonies.

The most common criticism made of Walton's First is that it is derivative of Sibelius. But nowadays we probably underestimate the British adulation of Sibelius in the Thirties. Then he seemed the saviour of a symphonic tradition threatened by the Second Viennese School's destruction of tonality, and anyone trying to write his first symphony could hardly avoid the influence entirely. It's remarkable that Walton's derivations are so slight – there's almost as much Bartok and Stravinsky as Sibelius. The emotional programme has been attributed to an episode in Walton's life but, whatever its origins, for once he managed to reconcile the public and private side of his personality with toughness and certainty.

The Violin Concerto of 1939 is a bridge between the music of the inter-war years and the style of the work which followed. The long-limbed melody with which it opens looks forward to the Second Symphony and *Troilus and Cressida*, the asymmetric rhythms of the scherzo back to the First Symphony. More than the Viola Concerto it succeeds in balancing the display vehicle (it was written for Jascha Heifetz) with a personal musical statement and combines soloist and orchestra more adroitly. In the large-scale works which came after the second war, the major-minor clashes which tinged the melodies of the Viola Concerto became an important expressive element. The openings of both the Second Symphony and the Cello Concerto contain this sort of ambiguity; the long-range harmonic control which is such an impressive feature of the First Symphony is now reduced to mere coloration.

At their best, as in parts of the Second Symphony and *Troilus and Cressida*, Walton's melodies have a pleasant, sweet and sour quality; at their worst, as in the Violin Sonata, the effect is of a tired lyricism. It is this tiredness which makes *Troilus* so unmemorable; as much as one is sustained by the operatic craft which is exhibited (Walton's ability to understand the demands of any musical form at the first attempt is quite remarkable) in retrospect little remains. Always a slow worker, in recent years the compositions have become fewer and slighter, the craftsmanship remaining impeccable, the music agreeable and impersonal.

The birthday concerts organised by the LSO and the BBC each carefully combined familiar masterpieces with more recent music. Conducted by André Previn, the LSO coupled the Violin Concerto and the Second Symphony with the very recent *Varii Capricci*, recomposed rather than transcribed from the Five Bagatelles for guitar. The violinist was Kyung-Wha Chung, lacking Heifetz's *diablerie* and whole-hearted romanticism in the Scherzo and Trio but otherwise quite dazzling, only occasionally indulging a particularly juicy phrase. Previn and his orchestra are almost ideal Walton interpreters: everything played with tremendous verve and razor-sharp rhythmic pointing, the symphony given for all its worth, the final variations unusually convincing. In comparison, the rhythms of the BBCSO under Colin Davis seemed quite limp-wristed. A more substantial programme of the Viola Concerto and the First Symphony also included the march *Crown Imperial* and the orchestral version of the song cycle *Anon in Love*, with Robert Tear obviously relishing the wit of the six anonymous lyrics. Peter Schidlof's account of the Viola Concerto was uneasy, especially for a player so masterly in the context of the Amadeus Quartet. He seemed disturbed by Davis's unwillingness to linger at all; as a result this already inward music became grey and characterless. Davis conducted the First as he conducts Sibelius, worrying the music along and upsetting the architectural tensions that Walton so carefully built into the structure. The composer, now unhappily confined to a wheelchair, received two standing ovations: he must have enjoyed his birthday.

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Architecture

Nathan Silver

Museum Menu

Commenting rather late on the National Gallery northern extension (opened June 1975) and the Museum of London (opened December 1976) doesn't require much apology, if one conceives of the problem not as reviewing theatrical first nights but more like writing up restaurants. The opening performance may have been wonderful, but more importantly, a year later are customers getting gummy crème brulée? Was it really worth having fancy scenery if high cost kept the menu invariable, if you see what I mean? For me, a building user rarely has much in common with the easily pleased or easily disgusted single-visit theatregoer, ready at an instant's notice to clap loudly or have a bored coughing fit. He's more like a typical restaurant customer, or more precisely like that perpetually undiscouraged *schlemiel* in the Jewish restaurant jokes, who gets insulted and offended, but has to come back time after time because (like the building you live in, or work in, or visit to see an exhibit) it's the only Jewish restaurant joke in town. 'Do you serve crabs here?' 'Sit down, we serve anybody.' And so these obdurate buildings do.

Compared with the British Museum Natural History extension (NS 13 August 1970), the National Gallery extension (DoE architects) deserves fewer customers' grumbles: its main object was to increase gallery space by about 30,000 square feet, which it adequately does, allowing almost all the National Gallery's works to be on display. A central preoccupation was with proper lighting. An argument rages among museum directors about whether paintings should be lit naturally or artificially, with Madrid's Prado, at least when I was last there, at one extreme (daylight through windows opposite glass on the Goyas made glare the primary exhibit). Those institutions using artificial light throughout are a few recent galleries of modern art; and those demonstrating positions in between are most galleries showing historical paintings. The argument for artificial light is that one can now achieve any exact 'colour temperature' one wishes, so there is no longer any excuse for wrongly coloured light; it's easy to control and vary, e.g., for changed exhibits or special displays; in some ways it's cheaper to achieve (as against the fancy skylight and louvre contraptions of controlled daylight). The argument for natural light is that it's natural, usually as the painter used when working.

The National Gallery northern extension has natural light plus fill-in artificial light on its Principal Gallery level, which makes up about half the accommodation. Under skylights, two perpendicular layers of blinds open and shut according to an annual programme of average light and a solar chart. Below this, a triple layer of glass diffuses the light and filters damaging ultra-violet rays. Fluorescents ('Deluxe Colorite' by Atlas) augment the daylight, on thyristor dimmers. The experiential effect of these six or seven sophisticated baffles and filters is less remarkable on one's philosophical outlook than sunrise in the Vale of Chaumony as described by Coleridge – in fact one would be hypersensitive, or a very long gallery stayer, to detect changes at all. Having said that, I must agree that there is a deeply felt satisfaction about knowing that the light is natural, however processed, just as one rejoices in knowing that the Van Dycks are real and not Kodachromes, however colour-perfect. Even so, achieving reasonable technical sufficiency isn't daunting: there is plenty of architectural research available on processing daylight for galleries. The trouble is that the DoE architects seem to have the science right, yet fall short on the expression. One can hardly believe the light is what it truly is because there are no deep sun screens, coffers, blinds, or similar well-understood visible forms of natural light deflection. One reads the elaborately contrived luminous ceiling as mere artificial lighting.

This sort of confident professionalism without the final inch, or few yards, of deep understanding (or mitigating art, one could unfashionably say) runs throughout the new gallery, and worries me, if not the seemingly satisfied directorial staff. For further example: however historical the collection, how could a gallery extension in the 1970s be done in dull green carpets, with a very dark wood ceiling in flat mitred parquet, as the Lower Gallery is done? And why are there nasty temporary ropes up in the galleries?

By the way, the National Gallery north extension has won a 'Building for the Disabled' award, and according to one handout, its entrance point 'is identifiable by the International Symbol of Access' (no further explanation – is it a pointing hand with jester's cuff? a dollar sign? I missed it). By these lights, the Museum of London (Powell Moya and Partners, architects) deserves the Disabled booby prize. Its Symbol of Access is currently a handwritten sign as big as your fist, and this is in windy London Wall, eternal top prize contender in the urban Anti-Street competition, desolate upper-pedestrian-deck category. The urgent questions here are, why such an appalling site (albeit overlooking an actual old piece of London wall)? And, given the terrible access problems built into the surroundings, why make people climb 30 feet to get to the front door? Why the funny shapes, the many materials, the bad graphics of 'Museum of London' spelled out in brown tile against white tile, undistinguished type face, vast letters? One is really at a loss to account for the exterior, the siting, and everything else that used to be considered 'the architecture' as opposed to the mere 'accommodation'.

Perhaps the museum's outside should be exonerated completely, as if it is mere packaging of an impermanent and quasi-accidental sort, akin to many of the exteriors at Disneyland which sensibly look like the wrong side of a film set – as they just about are. Instead of the forced fabric and the strained lines at the Museum of London this would have been a nice idea, because the interior has near-Disneyland assurance and splendour in its delightful exhibits (Higgins Ney and Partners, exhibition designers) and the disposition of spaces around them. Following a long lofty arched galleria of glass when returning across the figure-of-eight circulation plan makes beautiful sense, as does the always clear and even instructive use of ramps, steps, lighting levels and glimpses of the outside, which don't exhaust, but heighten interest and focus attention. To be sure, the Museum of London's mostly permanent display fosters coherence, since it calls for exhibition design, not super-flexible museum design – but whatever, it's public information at its best, and even most inspiring. It turns out that the accommodation is the architecture after all, which I find a reassuring idea. If you can make your way to the entrance ignoring the enervating exterior, it's a splendid two-hour experience for children or urban chauvinists of any age.

Thames Television 1976: The Facts

Thames Television 1976: The Facts

Thames Television's report on the calendar year 1976 has just been published.

It includes details of our programmes, the awards they won, (including both Italia Prizes), best-ever export achievement, and our record airtime sales revenue. The report is introduced by the Chairman, Howard Thomas CBE.

If you would like a copy, please write to Mrs Alison Danes, Thames Television, 306-316 Euston Road, London NW1 3BB or call her on 01-387 9494.

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Records

Wilfred Mellers

Semper dolens?

Lachrimae For Viols and Lute (1604)
The First Booke of Songes (1597) by JOHN DOWLAND performed by the Consort of Musicke, directed by Anthony Rooley *DSLO 517* £3.50 and *DSLO 508-9* £3.50 each

Nowadays most performances of pre-19th century music make some attempt at 'authenticity' and – given our lack of confidence in what we ourselves believe – the arguments for this are unassailable. Though valid creation is generated by a tension between public assumptions and private experience, an artist has no choice but to start from the conventions his age offers him. Sparks are most likely to ignite if a composer writes as effectively as he can within his given limitations; the spirit of the music is thus inseparable from the letter, and no one who has heard Bach or Dowland performed on contemporary instruments, with some deference to contemporary conventions of tempo, ornamentation and phrasing, will want again to hear them performed on modern instruments, with 19th- or 20th-century phrasing. Authenticity simply makes better sense. Everything 'sounds', where much was opaque; and in 'sounding', it becomes more relevant to us in the 20th century. Ultimately the authenticity that matters is not musicological but musical – and human.

This, however, brings us to the inescapable recognition that authenticity is a complex ideal. By studying contemporary sources we can unearth information about contemporary performance; but this information, though voluminous, is also often contradictory. By examining surviving instruments we can establish much about the sound sources of old music; but knowing how the instruments were constructed doesn't necessarily tell us how they were played. Moreover the scholar may be tempted to make of his knowledge a shibboleth, forgetting that our performances can't possibly be identified with the original, and shouldn't want to be, since we're radically different creatures with radically different responses. Authenticity has two related aspects, one of which pays tribute to what we know of historical evidence, whilst the other respects a given sequence of musical events. The two may coincide, but need not. When they don't, it must be music that makes history, not the other way round.

To achieve authenticity, historical or musical, one must be able to do as well as know. In my youth viols, in the hopeful hands of knowledgeable amateurs, tended to sound like vile primitive fiddles, seraphic lutes to behave in those hands like bucking broncos. Supreme artists like Landowska and Bream first made 'early' music sound like music, though we now know they played it 'wrong'. Today technically adept performers on viols and lutes are legion; yet technical competence allied with historical knowledge doesn't guarantee conviction. That comes only from experiencing the music as a way of life: as do Anthony Rooley and his group of singers and instrumentalists, the Consort of Musicke. Their project to record the complete works of John Dowland could be a decisive event: for Dowland is one of the greatest and certainly the most characterful of the Elizabethans and Jacobeans, whilst the Consort offers performances whose historicity is a reflection of the Renaissance view of the dignity and destiny of man.

The complete collection will comprise eight albums: four volumes of secular songs, one of religious songs, the instrumental *Lachrimae*, a volume of lute music and one of miscellaneous concerted works. Oiseau Lyre have sensibly chosen to issue the *Lachrimae*, Dowland's greatest instrumental work, out of chronological sequence, along with the *First Booke of Songes*, so that we get a taste of the mature composer at the same time as savouring his first exquisitely ripened fruits. For Rooley, the *Lachrimae* – seven Passionate Pavanes founded on Dowland's *Flow my teares*, interspersed with miscellaneous dances – have moral values that are more positive than negative. Far from being a debilitating exercise in fashionable melancholia, this music achieves from its dolour a Shakesperean tragic catharsis: which is its *raison d'être*. It's a secularized religious utterance wherein harmonic and lyrical passion are assuaged in 'pre-ordained' contrapuntal symmetries and in the arcane number symbolism that Dowland derived from hermetically Platonic philosophy. Though Rooley is indubitably right in his view of the piece, I'm not totally convinced by the gravity of his performance. Whilst I respect its historical probity, the music seems to me to call for greater flexibility, so that each line can 'speak' individually in making its contribution to the religious-civic whole. I distrust the belief that 'old' music should be left to 'speak for itself'; however could it (or any music), being made by humans for humans! To eschew 19th-century-style self-indulgence is one thing; wilfully to deny expressivity of contour is another, and I can't believe that the passionate musicians of Shakespeare's day did so. In this respect the Wenzingers' relatively romantic performance of the *Lachrimae* seems to me more on the mark than Rooley's impressive precision.

The performances in the double album of the *First Booke of Songes* are, however, exemplary. The music, being Dowland's astonishing Opus 1, is simpler, if hardly less haunting: so delicacy of rhythm and purity of intonation are here priorities, whether the songs are sung solo or in consort. I await expectantly the later volumes, especially the significantly titled *Pilgrimes Solace*, which surely contains the unequivocally greatest songs in the English language. I have high hopes that passion and probity will ride in harness; and I'm certain that Rooley's revelation of the treasures of the music for solo lute will supersede Bream's sublimely incorrect performances.

Weekend Competition

No 2458 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Time for another bout of misleading information for foreign tourists, with a special emphasis upon Jubilee celebrations, exhibitions, souvenirs, etc. 200-word limit, entries by 22 April.

No 2455 **Set by A. Boteman**

Competitors were asked to rewrite familiar passages of poetry in a highly inappropriate verse form.

Report **by the Lemon Kid**

I put the lemon on all the Lear limericks this week – you're not getting the cash *that* easily. Greedy lot. Still, with such a massive entry my squeezing arm began to tire, and grudging pleasure suffused my brain. £5 to each of you, for Hopkins, Tennyson, Pope, Ginsberg, MacGonagall and Eliot.

Thirty days to praise, to prize Him in April
and June,
Thirty, the price of betrayal, to pray in
September, November.
To each other month one more, God-given,
man-made moon-
Miracled, to hallow, to hang on His word,
to remember,
To wonder, watch, catch
Thirty-one days to remember.
But for cloud-threaded February, rain bringing
for the rending of us,
Hang-dog month, twenty-eight days of it,
a dolour not a dole,
Too short for the marvelling, the manna,
the man-mending of us –
Only in leap year a bonus, a boon-day,
salve for the soul,
Quadrennial day, to pray,
His pomp, powers extol.

LAURENCE FOWLER

Ba, ba, ba,
From the coal-black fleece O Sheep!
And I would that my tongue could mutter,
The oaths that arise in me.

And the bouncing cheques go on,
To settle the debts and the bills,
But oh for the touch of a greasy palm,
And the sound of the auctioneers' tills.

Oh well for his circle of friends,
Each one has a bagful quite free,
Oh well for the master, the dame and the boy –
But what, may I ask, about *me*?

TIM HOPKINS

Mark how Sir *Humpty*, seated on his wall,
Protuberantly sneers at one and all.
The *Sisters*, seeing, snick th'offending thread,
And *Dumpty* straight descends upon his head.
In vain the furious phaetons post to Kew;
The news must wait: 'His Highness is at loo'.
At length proud *Walpole* spurs the
steaming jade,
With *Walpole*'s crew, to offer tardy aid;
They strive, with *Solon*'s and the surgeon's arts,
Or to replace or mend the scattered parts.
Bootless they try to ignite the vital spark,
For *Dumpty* pays his dues in *Charon*'s
doleful barque.

LILY BEAN

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Jeez, I wonder what you and I
Did till we made it? Weren't we like some
crazy kids
Looking for a piece of the action?
I mean, scratching around in the fog instead
of walking in space?
Yeah, that's it. But what we have now
really blows my mind;
I've laid some chicks in my time,
But they can't touch you, Baby.

And now, let the sun grab our souls,
As we stare into our consciousness, unafraid;
This thing we've got, let it flow,
We're transmuted, Baby, into space.
Let those crazy astronauts go to the Moon,
Let them map out a new Universe,
Who needs one – we're already there.

JANET TERRY

To be or not to be, that is the question,
It's enough to give anyone indigestion;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer,
Or whether, on the other hand, to be tougher
And take arms against a sea of troubles
Treating them as though they were so
many bubbles.
Of course, there is always the possibility
of suicide,
But alas one doesn't know what will
happen to one after one has died,
Even having said all the right prayers
In the sleep of death one might still get
the most horrible nightmares,
And that is the reason man goes on putting
up with this life of shame and sin
Rather than do himself in.

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

A bad going we had of it
And such a journey, cock horses
Being what they are. Only to Banbury
Where there was certainly a cross
In that end was our beginning.
There was a lady too, fine
If that is your taste in fineness
Her horse was white as had been foretold
She wore rings, and her toes
Had bells of some sort upon them
Ringing and partly ringing,
Ensuring she has music of a kind
For her own journeys.

ROBIN CHASE

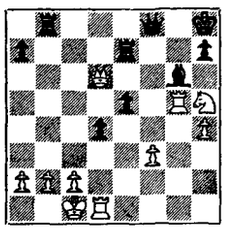
Tony Miles

Chess

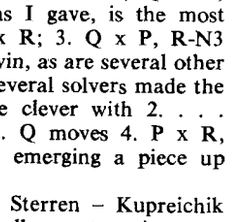
No. 28 February Problems

The February problems produced a considerable amount of interesting analysis.

Problem 19 (see 1st diagram) was intended to be fairly straightforward. All solvers found 1. . . . R x P! (2. K x R, R-N2ch and 3. . . . Q x Q) and the game (Sigurjonsson-Miles Wijk-aan-Zee '77) concluded 2. R-Q7? (both sides were short of time), R-N8ch: Resigns. However, some confusion arose over white's obvious desperation attempt 2. R x B. Now 2. . . . P x R; 3. Q x P, R-QB2! 4. K x R (or 4. R-Q2, R x RP), Q-N5ch; 5, K-R1, Q-B6ch; 6. K-N1, R-N2ch; 7. K-B1, Q-R6ch; 8. K-Q2, Q-K6 mate, as I gave, is the most elegant but 2. . . . P x R; 3. Q x P, R-N3 is perfectly adequate to win, as are several other choices. Unfortunately several solvers made the mistake of trying to be clever with 2. . . . R-N3, intending 3. . . . Q moves 4. P x R, but white has 3. R-B6! emerging a piece up with a winning position!



Problem 20 (Van der Sterren – Kupreichik Wijk-aan-Zee II) is basically an attractive trap. After 1. R-K4! black should not oblige with . . . P-KR3? (2. B x BP! N x B; 3. Q-N4!! winning a pawn) but play 1. . . . R-B4 or 1. . . . P-B6 with reasonable chances. On 1. . . . R-B4 white has 2. Q-N4 or 2. B-R4, P-KN4; 3. P-N4 and if 1. . . . P-B6 either 2. P-N4 or 2. R x QP!? In all cases white solves the problem of his stranded bishop. Other reasonable suggestions for white were 1. Q-R5, but after . . . P-B6 (1. . . . R-B4; 2. Q-N4 is also critical) 2. P-N4 the queen is misplaced, and 1. P-K5!? intending . . . P-KR3, 2. B-R4, P-KN4; 3. B x P, P x B; 4. Q-R5! However black need not react so violently and instead play . . . QR-K1 . . . P-B6.

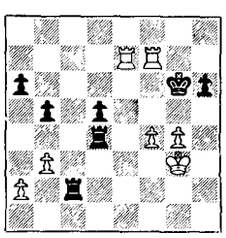


Problem 22 came from Problem 14 which came from Liberzon-Miles, Haifa '76. After 1. . . . P-N6, 2. QBP x P, Q x P; 3. Q x Pch, K-B1 white can win by either 4. Q x R (B7), R-R5; 5. Q-Q8ch, K-N2; 6. R x Pch! P x R; 7. Q-K7ch, K-N1; 8. Q-K8ch, K-N2; 9. P-R6ch! K-B3; 10. Q x R! Q x Q; 11. P-R7, as given, or 4. Q x R (Q4), Q-B7ch; 5. K-R1, R-B5; 6. Q-Q8ch, K-N2; 7. R x Pch, P x R; 8. P-R6ch, K-B2; 9. Q-Q7ch, K-B3; 10. P-R7 R-R5ch; 11. Q x R, Q x Qch; 12. K-N1.

For the benefit of those who recall problem 14 I have taken the liberty of giving the position before 1. . . . P-N6 since it has been pointed out by Mr Abrahams in his entry and by Mr Liberzon in his notes for Informator, that black can try 1. . . . K-B3, protecting K4 and removing the K from the danger zone. Liberzon assesses this as "unclear". A forced win for white is not readily apparent, but if anyone wishes to study the position further . . ., personally I am beginning to wish I had never played the game.

I will deal with problem 21 and the Karpov-Dorfman game and announce prize-winners next week.

Problem 28:
White to play. How should the game go? Entries to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked not later than Wednesday 20 April.

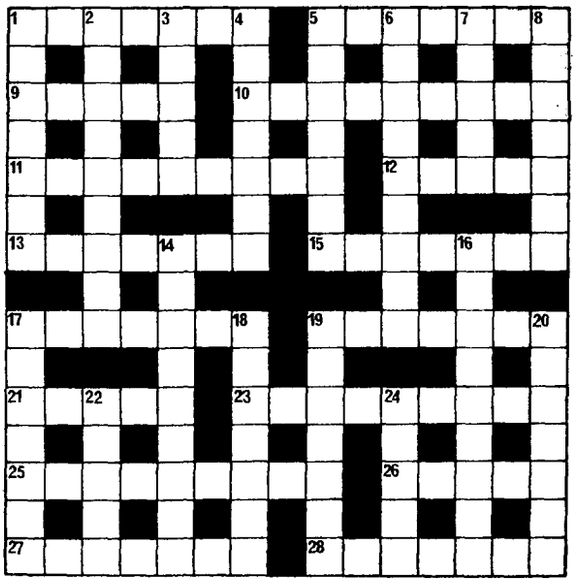


Solution to Problem 26:

No! 1. P-R4, K-Q3; 2. P-R5 (or 2. P-N5, BP x P; 3. BP x P, P x P; 4. P-R5, K-K3;), K-K3; 3. K-B5, P-B4! Drawing. Or 1. P-R3(!), K-Q3; 2. P-R4, K-B3; and (a) 3. P-R5, K-Q3; 4. P-N5, BP x P; 5. P x P, K-K3! 6. P-N6, K-B3; 7. K x P, K-N2; is a draw or (b) 3. P-N5, BP x P; 4. BP x P, P x P; 5. P-R5, P-N5; 6. K-K3! K-B4! drawing.

Weekend Crossword 1210

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1210, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 19 April.



ACROSS

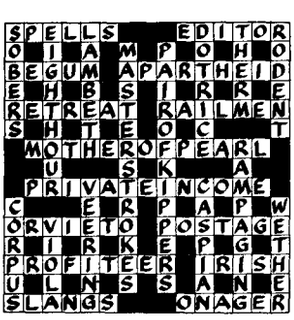
1. In the manner of Fred disheartened and looking somewhat embarrassed (7).
5. Record about undergraduate rowdyism which is easily broken into (7).
9. Where the worthless are about a pound (5).
10. Flight which may continue after landing (9).
11. Something lethal enclosing cotton in wool (9).
12. There's nothing in a chap returning with one for her (5).
13. To look without protection for the eye is wet (7).
15. 'The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy ——' *(MND)* (7).
17. Presage the finish of the drink (7).
19. If I left the bird, there would be a writer with a weapon (7).
21. Famous but not up to Heath's standard (5).
23. One ripens, turning into a very mature person! (9).
25. Soccer agitated about final getting noisier (9).
26. State whether it has an inside or not (5).
27. Pleases extraordinarily and so passes (7).
28. Representative makes a hole in one possibly (7).

DOWN

1. Setbacks when one has to be up among birds (7).
2. God and the farmer as provider of drink (9).
3. Still found in a finer type of human being (5).
4. Tale of the past shows man's not progressive (7).
5. More open and loud if less private (7).
6. Secretion which is linear and distorted (9).
7. State in which one is paid a housing allowance (5).
8. Taking average time (7).
14. Birds that spend old age in shells (9).
16. Monster who has mysterious union with a god (9).
17. Display of universal anguish? (7).
18. Relies on being hurried up about the finale (7).
19. Game which often goes with bridge (7).
20. Tell of the reverse suffered by a sailor in near being wrecked (7).
22. Island for the artist (5).
24. Peculiar expression of love in the rising south (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1208



Prizewinners to No 1208

P. Murphy (London SW1)
Mrs M. Daggers (London EC1)
L. R. Swapp (Oxford)

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The General Secretary,
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Contents

450 **James Fenton:** The Death of the Silly Party
451 **David Leitch:** Exit the Prince
452 **Patrick Wintour:** Burying Bullock
453 **Alexander Cockburn:** Carter Stubs His Toe
454 **Robin Blackburn:** Where is China's Khrushchev?
455 **Roger Woddis:** Old Boys' Bailey
456 **Household Faces 2:** Melvyn Bragg
457 **Donald Gould:** Mr Benyon's Gift
458 **Robin Cook:** Challenge to Security
459 **Mervyn Jones:** London Diary
460 **Yvonne Roberts:** The Entertainer
461 **Arthur Marshall:** Hip-Hip-Hurrah
462 **Letters to the Editor**

Books & Arts
466 **Stanley Sadie:** Yehudi Menuhin
467 **A. J. P. Taylor:** Erskine Childers
Other reviews by Neal Ascherson, Christopher Hill, Eric Rhode, Gillian Tindall, Jeremy Treglown
472 **Ian Hamilton:** Television
472 **Benedict Nightingale:** Theatre
473 **John Coleman:** Films
474 **Andrew Clements:** Music
475 **Nathan Silver:** Architecture
476 **Wilfred Mellers:** Records
476 **Weekend Competition**
477 **Chess and Crossword**
Poems by Peter Redgrove, Robin Fulton

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UNIVERSITY OF LONDON: A lecture entitled: 'Bentham's Veil of Mystery' will be given by Professor Karl Olivecrona (University of Lund, Sweden) at University College London, Gustave Tuck Theatre, Gower Street, WC1 at 5 p.m. on 15 April 1977. Admission free, without ticket. Academic Registrar.

MORRIS & THE TRADITION of the Scholar-Printer, Kelmscott House Colloquy, William Morris Centre, 26 Upper Mall, London W6. Saturday 23 April, 10.30 a.m-5 p.m. £3 (inc. buffet lunch). 01-748 5618.

TURNING POINT, 23 APRIL. All day meeting, Conway Hall London, 'The Politics of Tomorrow'. Speakers: Peter Cadogan, Mairead Corrigan, Brian Johnson, James Robertson, Manuela Sykes. Details and tickets (£2) from Alison Pritchard, 7 St. Ann's Villas, London W11. 01-603 6572.

ENGLISH REGIONALISM: Weekend School at Westham House, near Warwick. 22-24 April. Director: Arthur Blenkinsop MP. Speakers: Alan Williams MP (Minister of State, Dept of Industry); Lord Crowther-Hunt (Adviser to the Government on the Constitution); Stan Crowther MP: Peter Self and David Heald. Details from the Fabian Society, 11 Dartmouth Street, SW1. Tel. 01-930 3077.

DR SCHUMACHER speaks on 'Colon on Ownership and Participation', 30 April, 2 p.m., Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1. Tickets: 50p available from ICOM, 31 Hare St, Woolwich, SE18.

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THE ENERGY OF LIFE: THE LIFE & WORK of Dr Wilhelm Reich: Dr Eva Reich (his daughter), Dr Myron Sharaf & David Boadella discuss the pioneering contributions to psychotherapy, physics, biology & human awareness of this controversial figure, at Friends House, Euston Rd, NW1, Fri. 29 April, 7.30 p.m. Tickets £1.50 at door or tel. Quaesitor 01-452 8489.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Tues. 12 April 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. Wed. 13 April 6.30 p.m. Public Lecture 'Zen in Ikebana' – Stella Coe. All welcome. Send s.a.e. for full prog.

THEOSOPHY. Informal Forum on Basic Theosophy. Sun. 10 Apr. 8 p.m. S.a.e. for free pamphlet, book list, programme of talks, ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2

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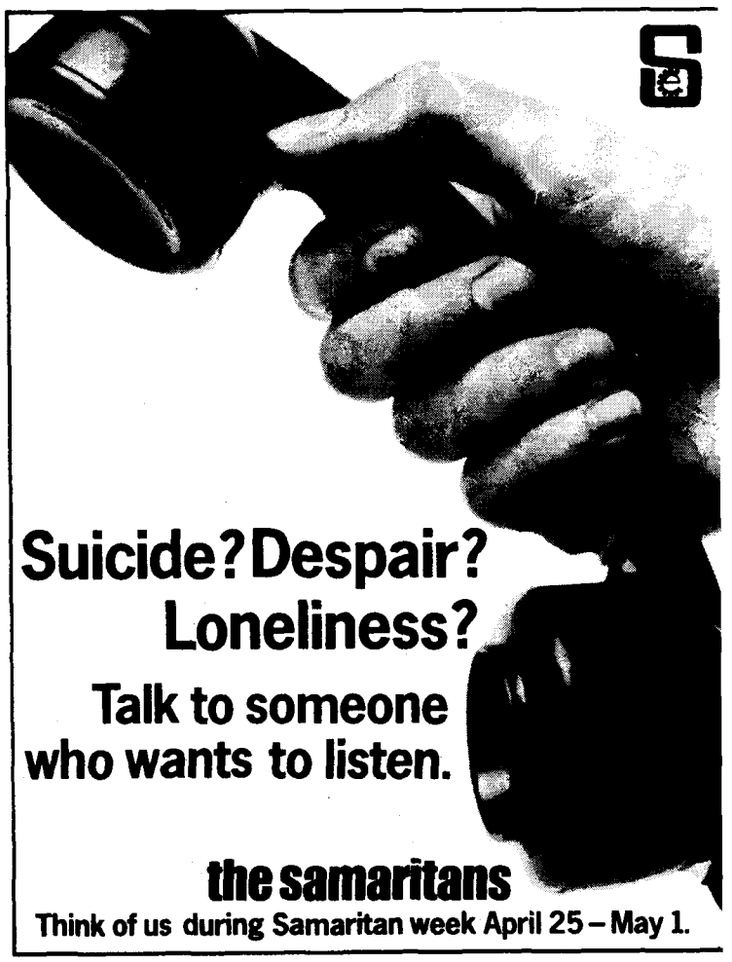
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